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In this issue

EDITORIAL

On People Mobility In "The State for the People"

By Kiryl Kaścian

Prior to the third Eastern Partnership summit scheduled for November in Vilnius the EaP region has drawn significant international attention. The expected signing of the association package between the EU and Ukraine induces a quite nervous reaction from Moscow that attempts to pull Ukraine into the Customs Union with subsequent Russia-centric political alignment and advancement of economic ties. Such a reaction may be explained by the approach that has always dominated Russian politics towards ex-USSR countries after 1991 and became even more pronounced after Putin became Russian president for the first time. Within this approach, Russia sees itself as a natural and the only geopolitical center and leader of the post-Soviet space. Therefore, any attempts of other states or formations to take role of integration centers in the post-Soviet space would be interpreted by the Kremlin as an intrusion into its semi-domestic affairs and induce a certain degree of counter-actions to bring an "insurgent" country into Russia's sphere of gravity. In other words, the recent stance of Moscow towards Kyiv proves that Russia is trying to convince Ukraine take the path Belarus has been following for number of years.

It should be recalled that the idea of EaP without Russia's participation as a partner may be interpreted as the first real attempt of the EU to view Belarus and five other partner countries outside the context of the Russian sphere of interests. Even though the EaP countries are treated by the EU on a case-by-case basis, the formalization of their relations with the EU embodied in the EaP may be regarded as the real understanding of the importance of each of these countries for the EU that came only in some 18 years after all six countries appeared in the political map.

Indeed, the EU intentions to enhance cooperation with the EaP countries may be revealed in order to help these countries to transform themselves so that they comply with the EU standards for the terms "security", "stability", and "prosperity". This is thought to be accompanied by "easier travel to the EU through gradual visa liberalization". Hoever, the matter of visa liberalization brings many challenges since the EU:

deals with it on a case-by-case basis,

considers this measure a long-term goal and

requires "conditions for a well managed and secure mobility".

What challenges can this situation bring to Belarus assumimg its authorities are reluctant to maintain a comprehensive dialogue on visa liberalization? What role could Russia play since its authorities are actively conducting such a dialogue? Citizens of Belarus are now subjected to a simplified procedures for obtaining Russian citizenship; Russia has been following the practice of granting its citizenship to residents of some post-Soviet territories on a massive scale.

For a number of consequent years Belarus has claimed to be the "world champion" regarding the issue of Schengen visas per 1000 of its citizens. This fact can neither be explained by an interest of Belarus' citizens in the EU mechanisms and policies, nor by their geopolitical preference. It rather illustrates quite a pragmatic interest of Belarusians in visiting the EU, be it on business activities, family issues or private trips. At the same time, citizens of Russia, Ukraine or Moldova not only pay less for Schengen visas but are also subjected to much more relaxed conditions for their obtaining. Therefore, it is also questionable whether the quantitative effect of the Schengen visas in Belarusian case will bring qualitative results, i.e. whether this world's highest number of Schengen visas per person can be transformed into the increase of international and interregional contacts' effectiveness in business, culture, civic society and all other relevant spheres of life. It can be hardly applied to Belarus and its current political situation. Such *status quo* not only devaluates Belarus' "championship", but also shows possible challenges Belarus may face.

The existing challenge for the unwillingness of the Belarusian authorities to facilitate the dialogue on visa liberalization may be described on basis of the Polish Card (in Polish: *Karta Polaka*). It was introduced in 2007 and confirms that its holder is a member of the Polish nation. Even though the Polish Card entitles its holder with neither the residence permit, nor entry permit, it does ensure its holder preferential treatment by the Polish state, including the process of obtaining visas. The most interesting issue here is not the negative reaction of Belarusian authorities but the discrepancy in the numbers of ethnic Poles living in Belarus provided by Belarus' official census (294,549 as of 2011) and by Polish authorities (ca. 900,000 people of Polish descent who live in Belarus). And even though the notions ethnicity and ethnic descent differ in their substance, it is likely that the number of people who declared themselves Belarusians during the national census but applied for the Polish Card will grow. In most cases it will not mean a change of ethnic affiliation but rather a pragmatic adjustment by individuals to the current situation. A better option is sought by means of using additional opportunities granted by the Polish state.

For a number of years Russia is consequently striving to maintain a visa-free regime with the EU for short-term visits. This situation has developed quite slowly, but the one thing is obvious – Russian authorities have eloquently declared their readiness to make this process possible. And contrary to their Belarusian counterparts, Russian authorities do declare interest in the facilitation of people's mobility — making thereby the Russian presence and interests in Europe growing and visible. This applies not only to the visa facilitation dialogue with the EU, but also to Israel, Argentina, Brazil and a number of other countries. Therefore, it could be concluded that a holder of the Russian passport could have somewhat more opportunities for foreign visa-free travel than a holder of the Belarusian one. Moreover,

a holder of the same Russian passport may live in Belarus and enjoy nearly the same scope of rights and protection as the holder of Belarusian one.

Before proceeding to reveal what it means for Belarus under the existing status quo, three aspects should be recalled. First, Belarusian citizens are subjected to a simplified procedure for obtaining Russian citizenship. Second, there is a significant number of Belarusian citizens permanently or temporarily working in Russia. Third, despite lack of permanent border control between Belarus and Russia and the existence on paper of the so-called "union state", in each case Russian authorities negotiate visa abolishing or facilitation only for their citizens and therefore not burden themselves with the work that Belarusian Foreign Ministry should do itself.

A number of scenarios is to be expected. The determining factor for depicting these scenarios is timing, i.e. it is important not how the visa facilitation is taking place, but when (and if at all) it will be turned into a visa-free regime. So, if the visa regime is abolished both for Belarus (alone or as a part of the EaP initiative) and for Russia at the same time in a short period of time passing between two these events , nothing will change in the existing status quo. If the visa regime with the EU is to be abolished for Belarus (alone or as a part of the EaP initiative) earlier than that for Russia, it would require the reintroduction of regular border control at the border between Belarus and Russia. Most likely it will cause an ardent politically motivated campaign by the Kremlin, criticizing Belarus of not fulfilling the obligations taken by the official Minsk under a number of integration projects orchestrated by Russia. In their substance it would resemble the recent stance of Moscow towards Kyiv. But the most dangerous scenario would result if the visa regime with the EU is abolished for Russia significantly earlier than for Belarus (alone or as a part of the EaP initiative). The uncontrolled border between Belarus and Russia is not as important here. The most important thing is that Belarusian citizens are subjected to a simplified procedure for obtaining Russian citizenship. And here it is likely to expect a pragmatic adjustment of a considerable portion of individual Belarusian citizens to the current situation, similar to that observed with the implementation of the Polish Card but on a significantly wider scale. It will first concern the category of formally still Belarusian citizens who permanently or temporarily live and work in Russia. For them it will be more convenient to obtain Russian citizenship just for the purpose of avoiding much additional bureaucracy concerning their business and private travels. Further potentially affected categories include, for instance, those Belarusian citizens with close relatives who are Russian citizens, or those who obtained their education in Russia. It is unlikely to predict how large is the category of people who would opt for Russian citizenship in all these cases, but it is definitely significantly larger than the estimated number of potential holders of the Polish Card. Again, in most cases the choice for Russian citizenship would be potentially determined not by the Russian ethnicity or descent or Russo-centric worldview but by the pragmatic choice to exploit more convenient and less bureaucratic options to achieve own goals. In any case, however, such a trend poses a threat for national security and stability in the Belarusian society - so highly cherished by the official Minsk. At the same time, it could be reasonable for the Belarusian MFA to begin being at least as effective as their Russian counterparts in facilitation of its citizens' mobility and thereby put at least a little meaning into the naked slogan "the state for the people" promoted by the official Minsk.

Concept of the Issue

The Fall 2013 issue of *Belarusian Review* encompasses a variety of texts related to various spheres of life and dealing with Belarus-related topics.

The issue begins with the editorial by **Kiryl Kascian** entitled *"On People Mobility in 'the State for the People'"* which opens a set of articles related to the EU and the Eastern Partnership on the eve of the third EaP summit scheduled for November in Vilnius. The editorial presents reflections on the potential visa liberalization scenarios in the EU eastern neighborhood. In his text *"Tackling Obstacles of Eastern Partnership"* **David Erkomaishvili** focuses on five years of the EaP development analyzing the key program's objectives and posing a question what comes after Vilnius. In his interview with *Belarusian Review*, a well-known Belarusian political analyst **Pavel Usov** offers his observations on Belarus' relations with the European Union in the context of the scheduled summit and on its possible results within a wider EaP perspective.

In his text eloquently entitled *"Belarus' independence was no accident, it was result of systemic political efforts"* **Siarhiej Navumčyk,** a former deputy of Belarus' Supreme Council and current 1st Vice-President of the BNR Rada Executive Council, explains why calling Belarus' independence in 1991 "accidental" is an erroneous approach which does not correspond to historical facts. A well-known professor **Zachar Šybieka** discusses the present Belarusian authorities' interpretation of the WWII events and the imposed identification of liberation from German Nazi invaders with independence and the main state holiday.

A significant bloc of the issue is devoted to the Sixth World Congress of Belarusians that took place on *23-24 July 2013 in Minsk. The issue contains a press release on this event prepared by the* Information Center of the World Association of Belarusians "Baćkaŭščyna", as well as impressions by **Alice Kipel**, president of the Washington, DC Chapter of the Belarusan-American Association (BAZA), and **Chviedar Niunka,** chairman of the Belarusian Culture Association in Lithuania. On behalf of our editorial board we are proudly announcing that the draft of one resolution of the Sixth World Congress of Belarusians was prepared by members of our editorial board.

Mirosław Jankowiak from the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences provides his observations as a participant of the Congress of Slavists that took place in August 20-27, 2013 in Minsk.

Our contributing editor and chief researcher, **Dr. Leonid Smilovitsky** from the the Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center, Tel Aviv University, in his text *"Haradok without Jews"* narrates about Haradok, a former small town in the Vileika district of the Vilna Gubernia and currently a village in the Maladziečna district of the Minsk Region, where – like in a drop of water – the fate of Belarusian Jews has been reflected.

A well-known professor **Adam Maldzis** in his text *"Why were Belarusian Valuables Exported to Galicia?"* refers to the personality of count Emeryk von Hutten-Czapski, a wealthy Belarusian landowner and a noted Czarist dignitary, and raises the issue why the valuable exhibits of Belarusian museums, were exported in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries from Minsk and Stańkava to Ľviv and Kraków.

A well-known Belarusian historian and expert on the-Grand Duchy of Lithuania, **Dr. Aleś Kraŭcevič** offers his reflections on why in the context of political history, and in the western historical literature Belarus is in no way identified with the Grand Duchy of Lichuania.

The issue contains a book review by **Andrzej Tichomirow** on the book "La construction idéologique slave orientale: Langues, races et nations dans la Russie du XIXe siècle (2012) written by a well-known French scholar of Belarusian descent Virginie Symaniec.

In his traditional comment for *Belarusian Review* professor **David R. Marples** analyzes the consequences of the summer 2013 Russian-Ukrainian trade war for Belarus and its economy.

We hope, our readership will enjoy this issue; on behalf of the editorial team of *Belarusian Review* we would like to invite new authors, particularly young scholars and analysts dealing with Belarus'-related issues who would be interested in contributing to the oldest continuously published journal in English language fully devoted to Belarus.

Belarusian Review Invites new Authors

Dear Friends!

Belarusian Review is the oldest continuously published journal in English language fully devoted to Belarus: to its current political and economic situation, culture and history, as well as to Belarusian diaspora. Already for 25 years *Belarusian Review* has been fully filling this niche, both as a printed journal and since 2011 as an electronic edition made in cooperation with *The_Point Journal*, providing a broad audience interested in Belarusian matters with journalist, analytical and scholarly texts. People ranging from U.S. senators to European MPs to students in libraries in the United States and Europe, to Belarusians in their home country read the journal.

Our journal is undergoing changes which would enable it to expand its niche in the very dynamic world of the information age – in order to broaden the range of people interested in Belarusian matters. We are looking forward to receive contributions from new authors, particularly from young scholars and analysts dealing with issues related to Belarus.

If you would like to submit your text to *Belarusian Review* please, email it to the address: **thepointjournal@gmail.com.** We accept texts in Belarusian, Czech, German, English, Polish, Slovak, Sorbian, and Ukrainian. By submitting the text, the author gives his/her consent to the translation of his/her text into the official languages of our website. The Board reserves the right to put the article to the website in its original language (German, Polish, Russian, etc.) if the translation into any of the website's language versions could not retain all the peculiarities of the original text.

Belarusian Review is an entirely noncommercial project operating on a voluntary basis. For any further information, please contact us at thepointjournal@gmail.com.

HISTORICAL DATES

August 14, 1385

The dynastic Union of **Kreva** was signed betwen the Grand Duchy of Litva and the Kingdom of Poland - its purpose being a common defense against the aggression of the German Teutonic Order. Under the terms of this treaty Grand Duke Jahajla married the Polish princess Jadwiga, and became the King of Poland. The dynastic union thus created a federation of Two Nations.

September 2-29, 1621

Anniversary of the **Battle of Chocin,** when the 70,000 strong united army of the Republic of Two Nations (Grand Duchy of Litva and Poland), under the leadership of Litva's top hetman Jan Karol Chadkievič defeated the Turk-Tatar forces of 220,000 men.

September 8, 1514

Anniversary of the **Battle of Vorsha,** when a military force of about 30,000 men, led by hetman Konstantin Astroski of the Grand Duchy of Litva defeated a Muscovite army of cca. 80,000 men near the town of Vorsha.

Since 1991 this date has been celebrated as the **Day of Belarusian Military Glory.**

FEATURES

Belarus' Independence Was No Accident; it was the Result Of Systemic Political Efforts

By Siarhiej Navumčyk

Peoples are declaring their Independence and the birth of a new country in various ways. In Belarus it took place on August 25, 1991, when the Supreme Soviet granted the Sovereignty Declaration status of a constitutional law, and adopted a a package of decisions designed to realize independence.

This event is being stubbornly ignored — in Belarus, as well as by western researchers.

In Belarus it is being hushed up because the Lukashenka's regime is oriented on maintaining in society's consciousness the myth about the Soviet times as the brightest period of the Belarusian nation. And the day of August 25, 1991 was distinguished by the fact that on the same day the Communist party of Belarus ceased its activity; according to his own admission, Lukashenka never discarded his party membership card.

Ignoring this event by the West has other reasons. In the texts of even very qualified and honest western researchers one may read that Belarus obtained its independence as a result of the Soviet Union's collapse. Precisely in this sequence: the Soviet Union collapsed first (by Yeltsin's will, of course), and then Belarus obtained independence (resulting from Yeltsin's grace). Under the Soviet Union's collapse one should understand the agreement signed in Viskuli in December of 1991. In other words, only due to the will of several politicians (some call it whims) there appeared a new country on the world's map. Western analysts often call Belarus' independence "accidental."

Such an attitude reflects a superficial, stereotyped view that has nothing in common with the reality.

First, Belarus was an independent country *de-iure* already on August 25, 1991 — independent to the same degree as Lithuania or Poland. Of course, a long road of re-building state institutions was facing the country, including the introduction of own currency, and creating own armed forces; however, in such Lithuania this process was not completed overnight either. On the other hand, Belarus' leadership at that time wasted its time playing hopeless games with Gorbachev, while ignoring the demands of the Popular Front's deputies.

Secondly, the very collapse of the Soviet Union was a result of processes that were taking place in former Soviet republics at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. They also included Belarus, where the society's forefront clearly demanded independence.

Belarus'independence was not accidental; it was the result of systemic political efforts. Independence, as the main political objective was declared on the BNF congress in May of 1990. In June of the same year the deputies presented the Supreme Soviet the project of Sovereignty Declaration. The Declaration was adopted on July 27 1990, yet with agreement to sign the Union's treaty (thus, Belarus remained a part of the Soviet Union). Also, the Declaration recognized the Soviet Constitution and laws retaining superiority over those of Belarus. During the entire year the parliamentary opposition has been demanding from the Supreme Soviet granting the Sovereignty Declaration status of a constitutional law; only on August 25, 1991 their efforts succeeded.

Finally, the idea of a free and independent Belarus has existed all the time during the 200 year-long Russian occupation; on March 25, 1918 it was realized in the form of the Belarusian Democratic Republic Republic (BNR). The creators of the BNR were less successful than politicians in Czechoslovakia and other countries, who succeeded in taking advantage of the "Spring of Nations" chance. However, in August 1991 this chance was exploited..

***Siarhiej Navumčyk** - born in 1961; served as deputy of Belarus' Supreme Council, and coordinator of the BNF parliamentary opposition; in 1996 granted political asylum in the U.S.A.; 1st Vice-President of the BNR Rada Executive Council.*

Tackling Obstacles Of Eastern Partnership

By David Erkomaishvili

In Prague in 2009, many substantial issues were related to the launch of the EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP) program. How to initiate a flagship initiative that would consolidate EU's presence in the post-Soviet space when all other major actors, including US, China, Russia, and leading regional actors had already developed their strategies vis-à-vis the region, without actually promising the EU membership for the aspiring states in the East. How to deal with the turn-democratic Georgia and Ukraine in the aftermath of the respective electoral revolutions. How to invite Belarus for participation in the new program but at the same time ward it off from the EU whose values are incompatible with the authoritarian practices of the Belarusian leadership. Though, this last quandary received a sophisticated diplomatic fix when then Czech foreign minister Karel Schwarzenberg travelled to Minsk to assure Alyaksandr Lukashenka that Belarus is a priority, along with other five post-Soviet sates included in the program, but at the same time communicated a message that in case that Belarusian leader arrives at the inauguration summit he would face a cold reception.

Five years later, EaP faces its first milestone when after the long-delayed progress the association package is about to be signed with Ukraine. It is important, thus, to examine the key program's objectives to understand what it has transformed into and what comes next.

Logically, EaP should have clearly declared its main political goal, to align post-Soviet space states in the EU

neighbourhood to EU's political standards, at the very beginning. Should this have happened, it would have rendered EaP a political alliance with all the due attributes. Besides, such exact positioning would have established important expectations that parties would have anticipated of each other. Instead, such alignment has never materialised. In fact, economic projects, financial bailout of Georgia after its bitter conflict with Russia, and limited civil society involvement featured the agenda. Add to this a multi-track 'more for more' policy, advocated by the EU, which set the partner states to compete against each other on the reforms track for better position and more concessions in the program and you get the shape EaP is in.

Ahead of the EaP summit in Vilnius, the question of signing at least one association package, with Ukraine, has without intention became strategic. Firstly, if the EU is successful at signing the package, even without immediate ratification it can interpret such an action as an EaP's PR success, also generating domestic support for current Ukrainian government. Secondly, this certainly will add momentum for other partner states to modernise, and follow the path the EU wants them to follow. Thirdly, association with the EU will spin off Ukrainian moral stance of alignment-generating state in the post-Soviet space, thus challenging a position that Moscow monopolised. Fourthly, a failure to offer practical political capital, by finally delivering unequivocal results, for domestic consumption in partner states will render EU fall short of being a regional, not to mention global player.

In fact, aims of the two sides, EU and partner states, coincide in this alignment. EU does not want, neither can it afford, to extend a promise of future membership to any of the post-Soviet states. Post-Soviet states, members of the EaP, are better off staying away from the full EU membership, to guarantee the freedom of foreign policy choices and comfortable pace of internal reforms. An example of Turkey, long-time aspirant state, which benefits from both free trade and association agreements, while retaining its unique and independent foreign policy is the case in point. This role is especially suitable for Ukraine which has the potential for building its own alliances transforming itself into equal and powerful regional player. Neither EU, nor Russia, advancing their own versions of conditionality, aim to help Ukraine emerge as a regional powerhouse. On the contrary, one can observe an updated version of the Cold War 'either with us or against us' narrative advocated by both actors.

Geopolitical Core

As complimenting part of the European Neighbourhood Policy, developed in 2004, EaP is designed to politically align the states on the EU's periphery with the bloc. But in order to understand the intention of the EaP, it is important to understand objective of the member states that tabled the initiative.

States that have been actively promoting the initiative on the EU institutional level – Poland and Sweden – saw the initiative as the tool to further strengthen EU's outreach to the East, into the post-Soviet space, especially vis-à-vis its relations with Russia, along with other concerns being the bloc's position within the post-Soviet space, where major actors US, China, and Russia alike were active.

In this regards, Ukraine has been the pivot state for the whole initiative from the outset, with original idea being to involve Kiev in the wider promotion of EU positions within the post-Soviet space and transforming EU into one of the key actors in the region. The role of Ukraine can hardly be underestimated. Taking into account Russian hegemony in the region, it is the only post-Soviet state which has the capacity to weaken Russian positions due to its unique feature which marks out Ukraine as the key partner among six targeted by the EU's initiative – ability to form alignments around it.

That ability was clearly demonstrated within GUAM, especially following the electoral revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine and consequent strongest alignment in the post-Soviet area, including common formally declared and institutionalised foreign policy goals of joining NATO and EU.

In 2007 Germany proposed the division of EU members on East- and South-looking introducing the ENP Plus concept. France paved the way for the joint Polish and Swedish initiative on EaP with the launch of the Union for Mediterranean in 2008. In this regard, EaP was never meant to be an integration project. Its sole aim was to keep partners out of the EU while engaging them politically. For that purpose, political alignment to the EU standards was chosen as a model. This gave the EU certain leverage over the partner states via the use of EaP as educational project aimed to direct partners' behaviour in line with the EU priorities.

At the same time the program had several issues right from the start. Firstly, the extent of the influence the EU aimed to exercise is questionable taking into account the tiny EaP budget, compared with other EU initiatives. Secondly, having introduced multilateral mechanism of cooperation, the lack of differentiation within the initiative, putting states of different areas of the post-Soviet space into one basket, was a questionable strategy.

While for Poland, strategic engagement with Ukraine and Belarus is of national security importance. The two states form a natural buffer for Poland's eastern border. But apart from that, they are entirely European, judging from the cultural, historical, and geographical perspectives. The choice is barely logical in terms of extension of the EaP to the West Asian states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia that fail to fit all three of the criteria of Europeaness. Reflecting tis fact is the wording of negotiated association agreements where Georgia is referred to as 'Eastern European country' while in case of Armenia it says nothing about the European identity and instead emphasises common history and values Yerevan shares with Europe.

For Poland, strategic position of Ukraine in the post-Soviet space is important in a sense that it ensures that while Kiev is exercising full sovereignty in its foreign policy choices, Ukraine will not become an outpost to project Russian domination into Central Europe. This is what Russia aims for exercising pressure to pull Ukraine into the Customs Union. Thus, investing in Ukraine's sovereignty, by making it less dependent on Russia via politically aligning it with the EU through Association Agreement and economically via Free Trade Agreement, EaP surfaces its key security objective.

However, being a member of the EU Poland cannot fulfil its objectives alone. Since the political and economic alignment of the six post-Soviet space states with the bloc requires dealing with 28 member states rather than one, as well as managing very complicated bureaucracy, Poland needs partners within the bloc.

Sweden has been a natural and reliable partner in this regard. Sweden and Poland have common interests in many areas, which implies that it is natural to work together. While Sweden is part of the EU, it is not part of NATO, unlike Poland. It position as a leading power in the Northern European region and strategic partner of the post-Soviet Baltic States provides Sweden with logical interest in the post-Soviet space.

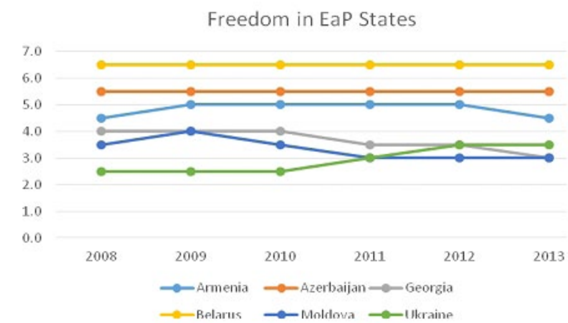
On the EU level, policy coordination between Poland and Sweden has been increasingly successful, especially in the areas of the EU strategy for the Baltic region and the EaP initiative. Polish-Swedish relationship reached a new milestone when the two states concluded a declaration on strategic political partnership in 2011. Apart from that, the two states are neighbours and partners in the EU and the Baltic Sea region which has two strategic priorities for both states – as an energy hub and in the field of security. Examples of joint efforts invested in various EU projects include EaP, EU Baltic Sea Strategy, democracy promotion, defence and security, and Arctic policy.

For Sweden, Russo-Georgian conflict of 2008, Moscow's increasingly assertive activities in the Arctic region, as well as Moscow's policy vis-à-vis the post-Soviet Baltic states – all contributed to a significant revision of national security policy.

Politically EaP contributed to the strengthening of those voices in the EU, and NATO, which have been emphasising growing instability and spotted opportunities for potential crises on the EU's periphery. In this regard, EaP has successfully focused the EU's attention on the northeastern region bordering it. At the same time, inclusion of Azerbaijan into the initiative suggests geopolitical nature of the project.

Democratic Appearance

Despite the fact that EU has increasingly emphasised democratising role of the EaP, brief analysis of the Freedom House data of freedom in the EaP states suggest little correlation between the introduction of the EaP initiative and democratisation in the partner states, with authoritarian governments offering incredible stability in their performance.



The graph documents freedom index in the EaP states starting from 2008, one year before the formal launch of the program. Blue vertical line marks the beginning of the EaP. The scale varies from 7.0 score as the worst (authoritarian regime) to 1.0 score as the best (democratic regime). Data: Freedom House

.Notwithstanding that the EaP offers incentives for democratisation and along with it involves civil society, together with the governments, in the dialogue, in reality there is almost no evidence that would suggest that the partner states are willing to align with the EU standards. This might support a hypothesis that a state cannot be democratised from outside. Rather this is lengthy, painful domestic progress.

The involvement of civil society in EaP dialogue is perhaps the most controversial step. By far in states where civil society is traditionally strong it continues to develop, while those partners which mostly supress any domestic dissent have continued with such practices. Moreover, in the conditions of the post-Soviet space democratic and transparent elections ousted reformist regimes in both Ukraine and Georgia paving the way to more conservative ones, willing to compromise instead of reform. Elections received disproportionate amount of attention from the EU, including in the EaP framework, while true determinant of democratisation, media, has been mostly omitted from the EaP program.

Another indication of geopolitical ambitions behind the project is EU's reaction to the Armenian declaration that it will join the Russian-sponsored Customs Union. EU commissioner on enlargement Štefan Füle made a statement in response indicating that the EU will not be able to sign the association package with Armenia in Vilnius as it was expected earlier. Negotiations on political association with Yerevan lasted three years and were concluded in June 2013 and expected to be formalised in November.

Such EU conditionality, despite its claims to the contrary, suggests similar principle as extended by Russia to the post-Soviet states which revolves around 'either, or' policy leaving little choice for the post-Soviet states put under pressure from the competing forces.

Even when it comes to the so-called 'carrots' in the form of visa liberalisation policies, along with access to the EU market, the extent to which it can be achieved is limited. Hardly one can envisage similar level of visa policy as, for example, the EU has with Chile, whereas the holder of a

Chilean passport would enjoy visa-free travel to the whole of the EU for up to three-month period without Chile being a member of the Schengen Area. Another issue is vine quotas. A very concrete measure, which would help EaP partners like Moldova or Georgia strengthen their trade with the EU as well as involve political cooperation would be to cancel those quotas.

What is Next?

The EU fell victim of inconsistency with set priorities. If those are value-based, as the EaP Prague Declaration entails, then the policy should be consistent and clear. Criticism should then also be extended to Moldova and Georgia and not just to Belarus and Azerbaijan. In this case, exclusion of those two states from the EaP altogether would have been both more fair and would also open the room for manoeuvre for the EU in its bilateral dealings with Minsk and Baku. The controversial policy of extending invitation to a state to participate in the EaP and imposing visa sanctions to the officials of that state not only alienates Minsk but it also sends very controversial signal to others. In case of Belarus, ahead of Vilnius summit it was not about what should be discussed but rather who should go to represent the country at the meeting. If the EaP initiative bears geopolitical components, they should have been made clear, thus, allowing the EU and partner states to focus on solving geopolitical issues.

EaP introduced the missing link to the EU relations with neighbouring regions, which until then, was consisting of the Union for the Mediterranean, strategic partnership with Russia, EU strategy in Central Asia, and the Black Sea Synergy. In this regard the initiative has fulfilled its function of attracting attention to the necessity of dealing with the post-Soviet space, while both increasing EU's presence and influence, as well as its say in the problems of the region

While there is a need to revise the EaP to clarify its goals and better position it to satisfy increasing demand for cooperation between the EU and the partner states, there are also indications that multilateral model of engagement with the post-Soviet space may be losing its grip. New initiatives have received attention recently. The newly developed European Endowment for Democracy, advanced by Poland, has the specific task of fostering the promotion of 'deep and sustainable democracy' in transition countries with a special focus on the Eastern Neighbourhood. The initiative is a EU coordinated but autonomously operated fund which is now starting to take care of the democracy promotion at the practical level, avoiding political involvement, and encouraging direct assistance to the civil society groups, NGOs and individuals acting in the partner states in support for democratisation and establishing pluralist political climate in their respective countries. Jointly created by the EU member states Endowment remains a private foundation, which allows for flexibility in its activities and low profile compared to political initiatives like the EaP.

Nevertheless, taking into account the problems of the Polish and Swedish brainchild, the question now becomes not whether the EaP is a success story or a failure, but most importantly what comes after Vilnius?

Pavel Usov: Lukashenka is a Rogue in Political Relations with EU

*Vilnius is to hold in November of 2013 the next, third summit of the "Eastern Partnership." Probably throughout the existence of this project Belarus has been its outsider, and its relations with the European Union may be defined as "cold peace," — notwithstanding the enormous potential. The quarterly **Belarusian Review** asked the well-known Belarusian analyst Pavel Usov to comment on Belarus' relations with the European Union in the context of the scheduled summit and on its possible results*

Belarusian Review (BR): *As far as the exclusion of Belarus' foreign minister Uladzimir Makiej is concerned, is it possible to consider this decision correct?*

Pavel Usov (PU): In general, the European Union's policy in relation with Belarus is losing energy, logic and effectiveness. It resembles the behavior of blindfolded person in a room, who is pretending to look for an exit, is bumping into walls, yet does not want to take the blindfold from his eyes. In other words, Europe is lacking a systemic approach; it hopes for an "accident", for a "what if." That is: "let's lift the sanctions; what if it helps to democratize Belarus." Today the European Union is lacking mechanisms of influencing Belarusian authorities. This is why it is difficult to call the Eastern Partnership a really effective project that might favor democratic changes not only in Belarus, but in other countries as well. It seems that Europe is more interested in keeping alive the project itself, than in worrying about the results; at the given moment the functioning of the "Eastern Partnership" has not produced any real strategic effect.

The approach of Belarusian authorities and those of other post-Soviet countries is fairly simple: their goal is to gain maximum possible economic advantages with minimum concessions on their side. The authoritarian leaders have learned very well to manipulate European politicians by means of rhetorics and various declarations concerning democracy, which is perceived by the European Union as real willingness to change. The Belarusian side exploits this tactic very successfully. By sending signals about their willingness to talk with Europe, Belarus' authorities are changing Europe's policies with no losses of their own.

Lifting sanctions on the foreign minister Uladzimir Makiej is precisely the effect of various manipulations with signals; it very much resembles the famous words from the book by Ilf and Petrov: "money in the morning, chairs in the evening." *Continuing the analogy, one might say that Lukashenka is playing the role of Ostap Bender, or a **rogue**,* in the game of political relations with Europe. Unfortunately, European officials so far have not understood this; they also seem to forget the history of the not so distant past.

Allowing Makiej to travel to countries of the European Union is absolutely a Europe's mistake; so are its hopes for changes in Belarus, and for the voluntary liberation of

political prisoners by Belarus' authrities — without any additional conditions.

As we have beeen observing, since lifting limits on Makiej's travels, there have been no changes in Belarus' domestic political life; most likely there will be none, even if Europe cancels all sanctions and invites Lukashenka to the summit in Vilnius. I will repeat what I have said in years: while Lukashenka remains in power, no changes in Belarus are possible.; you cannot transform the Belarusian president into a*"pro-European dictator."* Even if the European Union's policy will produce a "new dialogue," — it will end only in talks, considering the upcoming presidential elections in 2015.

One might state that the Belarusian regime will exert efforts to force the West to accept the political situation in Belarus, as a given fact. It seems that European officials are already willing to agree with it, as well as to renounce their principal position in order to satisfy their own illusions.

(BR:) *Can Lithuania — a relatively small country in European Union's context — play the role of an intermediary in encouraging Belarus to cooperate closer with the European Union?*

(PU): Since its joining the European Union, Lithuania aspired to assume the role of a key player in the eastern direction. The proximity of Belarus and historical contacts made it automatically a prioritized direction. The existence of the authoritarian regime in Belarus added to the Lithuanian republic's foreign policy a highly ideological content: democratization and europeization of Belarus. Along with this, close economic relations and business interests of the two sides make some Lithuanian politicians want to push through a strategy of dialogue with Belarus. In my opinion, Lithuania will promote widening diplomatic and political relations with Belarus' authorities. This strategy is based on the myth that Lukashenka is the guarantor of Belarus' independence , and that the country must be saved from the Russian expansion, by drawing it into closer relations with the European Union. However, we know very well that no such opportunities exist with these relations.

(BR): *What could mean for Belarus the possible Ukraine's association agreement with the European Union, and the ratification of analogical European Union's agreements with Armenia, Georgia, and Moldova?*

(PU): I am convinced that, considering the policy of Belarus' regime, relations with the European Union will be always - to a greater or lesser degree - poor. Speaking about the treaties on association and free trade, they are only treaties. They don't mean that the European Union will open itself in all aspects and immediately to the countries with which it signed treaties. The strong will of European politicians, clear vision and strategy are required for deepening relations. Preconditions and opportunities must be created to enable further integration. Also, such treaties do not mean that the signing country is democratic, or is soon to become one. A treaty on association is not a mechanism of political change. Turkey and Greece signed this document in 1960. However, it did not save them from an armed conflict, and Greece — from the dictatorship of black colonels. Similar documents were also signed with Egypt,Tunisia, Algeria and Syria within the framework of the European-Mediterranean Partnership. Of course, one may argue that countries of Eastern E urope and Caucasus are located next to the European Union and European influences may be there more significant. However, the example of Belarus proves the opposite. Therefore, even if Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Armenia, and Azerbaijan sign treaties on association, it will in no way influence the real and social-economic changes in these countries. More than that, the leadership of Armenia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan will perceive these steps as European Union's agreeement with existence of authoritarian regimes in these countries , and a "permission for a further tightening of screws." Then why are repressions possible in Turkey, and not in Ukraine or Armenia? It seems to me, that, having allowed concessions to the leadership of countries like Ukraine and Armenia, the European Union will get into an ambiguous situation, if it does not do the same in relations with Belarus. Having said "A," one will have to say "B," — which means signing a treaty also with Belarus. I think that European officials will, when required, find "proofs of good will" by Belarus' authorities, and of improved political situation in the country — for instance, like today's political conditions in Belarus are better than those in the Soviet times.

However, I want to stress once again that a treaty on association will not signify bringing Belarus nearer to Europe, or the other way around. It will neither be reflected in the essence of the political regime in the country.

Zachar Sybieka: Citizens of Belarus so far don't have an Independence Holiday

The year 2014 will be the 70th anniversary of Belarus' liberation from German fascist invaders. The consequences of World War II had already in Soviet times a tremendously important meaning in the state's policy; however, beginning with 1996 the day of Belarus' liberation from German fascist invaders is being observed as the main state holiday — the Independence Day (Day of the Republic). How important is World WarII in the current state's policy ? How does the present authorities' interpretation of those events differ from that in the former Belarusian SSR? Does the society identify the liberation from German fascist invaders with independence? How does the observance of the main state holiday on this date of liberation affect the perception of that war by the young generation? ***Belarusian Review*** has asked the well-known Belarusian historian, ***professor Zachar Sybieka*** these questions.

Zachar Sybieka: " In the policy conducted by the leadership of Republic of Belarus the Second World War is simply ignored. It is being overshadowed by the Great Patriotic War, yet, these concepts do differ. The role of an independence symbol is being usurped by the Soviet myth about the exclusive role of the Soviet Union that sup-

posedly almost single-handedly defeated the Nazi Germany. This is an indirect eulogy of the socialist order and ideology that supposedly secured the victory. No country, except the Soviet Union, and now Belarus and Russia, has ever regarded the second World War as patriotic. It is understood that the victory over Nazism was the result of common efforts of countries of an anti-Hitler coalition _ not of one certain country.

Moreover, the current Belarus' leadership is using as a symbol of independence also the myth created by the former leadership of BSSR — about the exclusive role of Belarusian people in the expulsion of Nazi invaders, about the guerrilla republic. This myth is acquiring fantastic dimensions; it is becoming an important political instrument. The fact of Belarus inheriting the Soviet Union's glory is being excessively exploited; the present leadership is taking advantage and is benefitting from the aureole of victors. Victors are not sued; they are forgiven many misdeeds. By staging grandiose celebrations of Belarus' liberatiom from Nazis, the country's leaders obtain bonuses from Russia, for whom the 1945 victory is sacred.

Of course, Belarus' independence began being realized only after the Sovereignty Declaration of BSSR on August 25, 1991. However, bestowing on this day the status of an independence holiday would mean approving the collapse of the Soviet Union, and admitting the crash of the socialist doctrine. Therefore, due to exclusively ideological reasons, the society is being foisted a completely absurd connection of Belarus' liberation from Nazi occupation with the day of independence, the day of the republic, and actually with the day sovereign Belarus was born. Such a (*кульбіт*) calculates with the exclusively (?) low historical culture of the Belarusian society. However, the people have not yet lost the common sense. In my opinion, they view July 3rd not as the independence day, and not even as a day of liberation, but rather as a holiday dedicated to the victory over Nazism.

The annual monotonous and excessively politicized scenarios of celebrating July 3rd became simply boring. Instead of thoughtful study and evaluation of the World WarII events, we have a boring repetition of ideological stereotypes. Experienced young people increasingly clearly demonstrate their nihilistic attitude toward the heroization and schematization of events of the past war — although these events really define the people's fate in Belarus' history. Only after its liberation from Nazis the Belarusian people became one; its country acquired international authority, and went through a process of modernization. Therefore Belarusian citizens should celebrate the victory over Nazism or Belarus' liberatiom from Nazism; however, this victory cannot be associated with independence.

It turns out that so far Belarus' citizens have no independence holiday of their country. They will probably set it up only after the liberation from Communism. And it won't be necessarily the 25th of August.

BELARUS' FORUM

The Sixth World Congress of Belarusians

23-24 July 2013, in Minsk

Twenty years ago, in 1993, the First World Congress of Belarusians took place; after many decades after bidding farewell to their homeland Belarusians from the distant abroad have come home again. That particular congress attracted over 1,200 delegates and guests. The Sixth World Congress of Belarusians, organized this jubilee year of 2013, concluded its work on July 24th. It, as well as all previous congresses, was organized by the World Association of Belarusians "Baćkaŭščyna." Altogether it was attended by 330 delegates from 22 foreign countries, and Belarus.

The Congress was opened on July 23rd in the Johannes Rau International Educational Center in Minsk. The Congress also welcomed diplomatic representatives of Ukraine, the U.S.A, Poland, and the Netherlands, as well as 14 representatives of Belarus' state institutions: Minister of Culture **Barys Śviatloŭ**, the Plenipotentiary for Matters of Religions and Nationalities **Leanid Huliaka**, director of the Republican center of national cultures **Michail Rybakoŭ**, and representatives of the following state institutions: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Economy, and the Belarus' National Assembly.

The Congress' main theme became **"The Belarusian nation in conditions of globalization: challenges and opportunities."**

After the congress' participants were welcomed by the director of "Baćkaŭščyna," Ms. **Aliena Makoŭskaja**; they were also addressed by the Minister of Culture, **Barys Sviatloŭ.** Welcoming words from Filaret, Metropolitan of Minsk and Sluck, were read by the protoiereus and professor of Minsk Spiritual Academy, **Sierhij Hardun**; father **Jaŭhien Usošyn** read a greeting from the apostolic visitator for Belarus' Greek-Catholics.

Moderators of the first Congress day — **Radzim Harecki, Valery Hierasimaŭ**, and **Aleh Rudakoŭ**, read out greetings from the associations and activists of the Belarusian diaspora, addressed to the World Association of Belarusians "Baćkaŭščna."

Basic reports were delivered by **Aliena Makoŭskaja**, the researcher of the Belarusian diaspora — **Natallia Hardzijenka**, the chairwoman of the Washington, D.C. chapter of the Belarusian-American Association — **Alice Kipe**l, and the member of the regional council of the Irkutsk Jan Čerski association of Belarusian culture — **Aleh Rudakoŭ**. They have defined the current basic problems facing the Belarusian diaspora, and the ways of solving them. In particular, the reporters noted the necessity of adopting the *Law on Belarusians Living Abroad*, as well as the need to arrange the cooperation of Belarus' authorities with Belarusians abroad under democratic conditions, to support the popu-

larization of the Belarusian language among Belarusians, to search for ways to resist the assimilation of recently emigrated Belarusians, to organize Belarusian schools abroad, etc. The main reports delivered at the Congress are available at the may be read on the website of the World Association of Belarusians "Baćkaŭščyna".

World Congresses of Belarusians offer a good opportunity to discuss problems and successes of Belarusian diaspora associations, but also to analyze the activity of the World Association of Belarusians "Baćkaŭščyna" itself. A lot has been done in the 4-year period between the Congresses; the half-hour report by the "Baćkaŭščyna's" Council chairwoman **Nina Šydloŭskaja** was not long enough to cover everything accomplished in years 2009 -2013.

The Congress' participants included Belarusians of different countries, different generations and views. Representatives of the officialdom, business, activists of culture and scholastic research delivered reports and participated in panel discussions. The Congress gave them all an opportunity to meet one another and express their opinions on topics disturbing them most.

The very acute issues of the native language and national identity were raised again. The delegates often expressed different views on the issue of bilingualism, and on whether a person may be considered a Belarusian without speaking Belarusian. In general, however, the unanimous agreement prevailed — that the Belarusian language represents the foundation of the nation.

A more thorough discussion of these problems took place in separate sections: *"The potential of Belarusian internal forces and diaspora in strengthening the national identity," "The 'new' and 'old' emigration — their cooperation for the benefit of the nation's development,"*, and *"The cultural heritage of the Belarusian diaspora."*

The Congress also included a cultural program. The World's Association of Belarusians "Baćkaŭščyna" staged in honor of the 20th anniversary of the First Congress an exhibition of paintings supplied by members of the Association of Belarusian artists of the Baltic region "*Maju honar* (I have the honor)" and personally by its chairman, **Viačka Cieleš** (Latvia). This exhibition was shown in Belarus for the first time. So was the exhibition of photographs from the First Congress (in 1993). A special exhibition entitled "In letters and images: heritage of the Belarusian diaspora in the West." It was prepared by **Natallia Hardzijenka** (Belarus) and **Liavon Jurevič** (USA), and displayed objects of material culture, meticulously collected by Belarusian diaspora centers in England and the USA. It has never been shown in Belarus before.

At the end of the Congress' first day the delegates were treated to a wonderful concert. Its first part featured Belarusian collectives and soloists from abroad: the Irkutsk band of the authentic song "Kryvičy," singers Aliena Kapylova from Novasibirsk, and Anastasia Trubiankova(Russia), and the musical duo of Siarhiej Doŭhušaŭ and Aleś Jasinski from the Czech Republic. The Belarusian poetess Ina Snarskaja (from Ukraine), read her poetry. The second part of the concert featured the young Belarusian collective "Svajo nieba," and well-known bands "Pawa" and "Palac."

The work of the Congress continued on July 24th. Representatives of Belarusian associations shared their problems and successes, expressed their thoughts and ideas. Also, within the framework of the Congress, there was presented a series of cultural projects, including books, published by the diasporas. Especially for the Congres' 20th anniversary, a book was published by **Hanna Surmač** (USA), entitled *"Belarus without borders."* The book's author remarked in her greeting: "Belarus without borders is the Belarusian community we are building by our common efforts, by extending the Belarusian presence in the whole world, regardless of state boundaries."

Following projects were presented: the Belarusian Internet library "Kamunikat", a musical disc "Pieciarburhski Sšytak (The St. Petersburg notebook)". The latter is a part of a large project "Bielaruski Pieciarburh," initiated by a member of "Baćkaŭščyna's" Great Council, historian **Mikola Nikalajeŭ. Andrej Zalatar** presented the APP STORE downloadable First Belarusian Alphabet for the IOS platform, — created by the Belarusian cultural campaign "Budźma bielarusami!" and the publishing house Kinderfox. Altogether there were presented 10 projects and books, developed by the Belarusian diaspora; they will definitely interest Belarusians both at home and abroad.

The main result of the Congress' work became the adoption of documents dealing with Belarusians world-wide, regardless of their residence. First of all, it was the appeal to the National Assembly, the Government and the President of the Republic of Belarus — to create a legal and regulatory basis for mutual relations with Belarusians living abroad, as well as the program "Belarusians Abroad" (2013-2017), designed to preserve the Belarusian presence world-wide in all its manifestations, to consolidate the Belarusian nation, and to strengthen the civic society in Belarus.

The adopted appeal contains the following words: "In over 20 years a a legal and regulatory basis for relations with the multi-million strong Belarusian diaspora has not been created:

1) The law *"On Belarusians living abroad"* has not been adopted, status of a 'Belarusian living abroad' has not been elaborated and legally established,

2) The State program **"Belarusians Living Abroad"** has not been adopted,

3) a government commission on Affairs of Belarusians abroad has not been created,

4) a parliamentary commission on Affairs of Belarusians abroad has not been created,

5) A scholarly center - for researching the Belarusian diaspora, and associated with the National Academy of Sciences, has not been created.

Not taking advantage of the rich potential of the Belarusian diaspora results in great losses to state interests of the Republic of Belarus, and to the entire Belarusian nation. We appeal to the President of the Republic of Belarus, to the National Assembly, and the Government to accelerate the adoption of the law *"On Belarusians living abroad"* and of the state program *"Belarusians Living Abroad,"* as well as to

undertake remaining necessary measures for preservation and development of the Belarusian diaspora.

The Congress has adopted following resolutions: *"The Belarusian language — the main factor for the preservation of Belarusian nation", "On preservation of the historical and cultural legacy", "On transliteration of names of the Belarusian geographic subjects"*, as well as the overall resulting resolution of the Congress.

All delegates agreed with the text of resolution dealing with the Belarusian language. The document says: "We appeal to all Belarusians in the Republic of Belarus and abroad to actively use the Belarusian language in all spheres of life and activity."

The resolution "On preservation of the historical and cultural legacy" notes: "Valuable objects of the historical-cultural legacy exist also abroad, and, equally with memorials located in Belarus, require attention and defense by the Belarusian state."

The resolution *"On transliteration of names of the Belarusian geographic subjects"* (**Editor's note:** the draft resolution was prepared by the members of our editorial board) approves in the associated "Instruction on transliteration of geographic names in the Republic of Belarus by using letters of Roman alphabet" rendering geographic names from the Belarusian language by means of the Belarusian lacinka, and exhorts favoring continued and wider use of the Belarusian lacinka, as a system of transliteration.

In addition, the Congress adopted the declaration *"On the act of good will."* Its text says: "We appeal to Belarus' authorities to perform an act of good will by liberating people imprisoned as punishment for their political convictions."

All adopted documents are posted on the website of the World Association of Belarusians "Baćkaŭščyna", and have been forwarded to corresponding state institutions.

Elections to leading bodies of the World Association of Belarusians "Baćkaŭščyna." were held after the adoption of resulting documents. **Aliena Makoŭskaja** was re-elected Director of the association, **Nina Šydloŭskaja** as chairwoman of the Association's Council. They thanked the delegates for their trust, and emphasized that occupying a leading position in a civic organization represents a great honor, with much work and responsibility at the same time. Valiery Hierasimaŭ and Barys Stuk were elected to positions of deputy directors.

New members of the Association's Great Council were also elected. This Council traditionally consists of 'Belarusian' members, and 'members from abroad.' This time 50 of its members were elected from Belarus, and the same number from abroad.

The Congress has decided to award the status of honorable membership to 13 members of the Association's Great Council. This status is defined in the Association's bylaws; it serves to distinguish people, who, for many years have been working for the benefit of the World Association of Belarusians "Baćkaŭščyna."

Source: Information Center of the World Association of Belarusians "Baćkaŭščyna".



Re-elected Director Aliena Makoŭskaja



Musical duo from the Czech Republic



Minister of Culture Barys Śviatloŭ

BAZA Representative Participated in the Sixth World Congress of Belarusians

The Sixth World Congress of Belarusians, organized by the World Association of Belarusians "Baćkaŭščyna" ("Fatherland"), took place on July 23-24, 2013, at the Johannes Rau International Educational Center, in Minsk. Representing the Belarusan-American Association (BAZA) was the president of its Washington, DC Chapter, **Alice Kipel**, who was among only four Belarusians from the United States in attendance.

In her presentation, *"Historical Comparisons and Experiences with Respect to Changes in Waves and Generations of Belarusians in America,"* Alice Kipel touched upon the differences between current immigrants and the "old" (i.e., post-World War II) immigrants, the search for ways to combat the "loss" of Belarusians who have gone abroad (especially with respect to the "new" emigration), the organization of interaction between different generations of emigrants and other issues.



Alice Kipel

Raised very prominently once again was the issue of the Belarusian language and the issue of national identity. Despite the fact that the delegates expressed different views on bilingualism and on the question of whether someone can be considered a Belarusian if he/she does not speak Belarusian, unanimity prevailed that the Belarusian language is the foundation of the nation. Delegates also had varied opinions and evaluations of the attitudes of Belarusian diplomatic missions towards Belarusian organizations in exile. A more detailed discussion of these various problems and issues occurred during several breakout sections. Alice Kipel was one of the moderators of the breakout section entitled and in that role presented a summary of the breakout section during the second day of the convention.

The representative of the Belarusian diaspora in America also gave a number of interviews to Belarusian and foreign media, including BelaPAN, Radio Liberty, Radio Racyia and Deutsche Welle.

After adopting various Congress documents and resolutions, elections were held for the governing bodies of the "Baćkaŭščyna" association. Aliena Makoŭskaja was re-elected as the Director of the Association, and Nina Šydloŭskaja as Chairman of the Association's Council. Also elected was a new Great Council, which traditionally consists of Belarusian and foreign members. Alice Kipel was among those elected to the Great Council (along with others from the United States), thus confirming the representation of the interests of Belarusian Americans within the "Baćkaŭščyna association.

Source: Press Service of the Washington Chapter of BAZA

Chviedar Niuńka: My Impressions after the Sixth World Congress

By Chviedar Niuńka
chairman of the Belarusian Culture Association in Lithuania

I have not expected anymore to get an entry visa for the World Congress of Belarusians. In the year's beginning, my passport was stamped with a note that my entry was prohibited. However, thanks to efforts by energetic leaders of "Baćkaŭščyna," — Aliena Makoŭskaja and Nina Šydloŭskaja, I eventually did get a one-time visa to the Congress. Thanks to them, the Sixth World Congress in Miensk succeeded in taking place on the highest organizational level. Considering that it took place without any financial assistance by Belarus' authrities (a precedent in the civilized world), the organization and conduct of the Congress deserve highest appreciation.

Delegates to the Congress have discussed some — for Belarusians living abroad — very important and topical problems and issues, namely:

a) preservation of national identity in conditions of globalization and assimilation,

b) realistic threat facing the Belarusian language in Belarus; it is the main factor endangering the existence of the Belarusian nation and statehood,

c) absence of legislative documents for Belarusians living abroad; they exist in all neighboring countries — while Belarus has not dealt with this issue in the last 20 years.



Chviedar Niuńka

On the whole, the Congress proceedings have passed in a relaxed and creative atmosphere. Different views were heard on current acute problems and on their solutions... Finally, important resulting documents and appeals to the authorities and the civil society were adopted by the absolute majority of delegates' votes. The leadership of the World Association of Belarusians "Baćkaŭščyna" as well as the leadership of its Little and Great Councils has been elected unanimously.

One would wish that the presence of responsible representatives of Belarus'ruling structures in the World Congress will contribute to the solution of sore problems facing today Belarusians living abroad.

The Congress of Slavists Minsk, August 20-27, 2013

By Mirosław Jankowiak

In days 20-27 of August, 2013 I had the opportinity to attend the Congress of Slavists, a traditional international conference, taking place only once in 5 years. It is a very important scholarly event; every young slavist considers it an honor to attend it. For the first time in history it took place in Belarus, in Minsk, which for Belarusianists meant a pleasant fortune, that might not be repeated in decades.

The Congress of Slavists provides a perfect opportunity of meeting many outstanding specialists (including Belarusianists) and getting to know them personally, as well of seeing many new editions in the associated book exhibition. It is worthwhile stressing, that in the world there exist over 100 scholarly periodicals dealing with the Slavist topics.

From the invited 800 persons about 600 have arrived — not only from Europe, but also from such countries, as the U.S.A, Canada, Australia, or Japan. All this indicates the tremendous world-wide significance of Slavic research, and that Slavic peoples form a certain community. Currently the word Slavistics is beginning to acquire an increasingly wider meaning. It is not any more just linguistics or folklore, but widely understood knowledge of cultures, religious aspects, Slavic literatures, or Slavs' origin in the past and today. Everything began in the 19th century by the interest in languages and folklore, as well as by the formation of contemporary Slavic peoples.

The Congress of Slavists first of all presented a great challenge to Belarus itself, not only of logistic nature; it provided a chance for the best possible presentation to foreign guests. One has to admit, that from the organizational standpoint the Congress was very well prepared, including its artistic part — one can recall the splendid performance of a dance group at the Congress opening. However, the organizers did not manage to avoid certain "delicacies," like, for instance, the request by police, addressed to several attendees after the first , festive day of the Congress opening — to disperse, because "in Belarus illegal assemblies are prohibited."

The Congress was opened with three lectures. Two of them — by Prof. Elżbieta Smułkowa (*Language and subject and integration factor in the Belarus-Poland-Lithuania borderland.*) and by Prof Hienadź Cychun (*Aspects of Slavic areal linguistics*) — dealt with language issues and were characterized by a very high scholarly level. The third lecture, less scholarly, was delivered by Prof. Arnold McMillin, touched not only on literary issues, but also on those of social-political nature, related with the current authorities of Belarus. The work of the Congress jointly consisted of 20 sections. Most of them were dealing with linguistics. Somewhat fewer participants represented such areas of scholarship as literature, cultural studies and history.

BELARUS ABROAD

Belarusian Festivals And Exhibitions in New Jersey

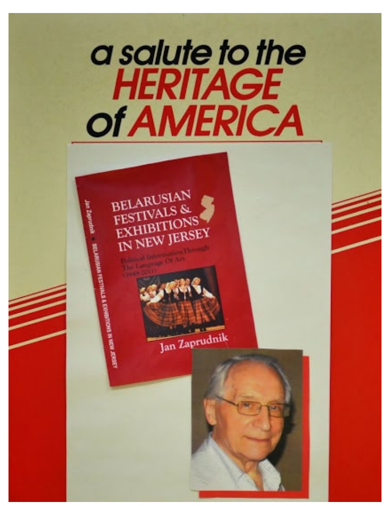
Political Information Through the Language of Art (1948 - 2011)

This book, written by the historian Dr. **Jan Zaprudnik**, was festively presented on September 15, 2013 in the Belarusian-American Center in South River, New Jersey, U.S.A.

The well-illustrated book describes Belarusian festivals and exhibitions in the Atlantic coast state of New Jersey, inhabited by tens of thousands of emigres from Belarus, with durable civic organizations and several Orthodox parishes. In 1975 the state administration suggested that the Belarusian community stage its own ethnic festivals, in the town of Holmdel.

Since then these festivals have became an annual event. In addition, the town of South River stages popular annual Belarusian art exhibitions.

Since the book is primarily addressed to Belarusians living in the U.S.A, its text is in both Belarusian and English



Culture & History

Haradok without Jews

By Leonid Smilovitsky

I visit Belarus almost every year. It is connected with topics of my scholarly interests. I was born here, educated, married, begot my first son, and began my scholarly career. It all seems familiar, yet changes are obvious. Every time I visit, I find something new, inimitable, specific only to this country with its orders, national character, and attitude to the surrounding world.

Now I want to narrate about Haradok (Russian: *Gorodok,* Polish: *Gródek*), where — like in a drop of water — the fate of Belarusian Jews has been reflected. Before the Second World War this ethnic group constituted one million people, or 10% of Belarus' population.

Haradok is the former small town in the Vileika district of the Vilna gubernia; now it is a village in the Maladziečna district of the Minsk Region. I am travelling to my acquaintances Tatsiana and Aliaksandr Smolik. Tatsiana is the director of the local museum; she is planning to open a Jewish exposition . And she is not alone in her initiative. Lately the the Jewish history of Belarus has been eliciting increasing interest. This is encouraging. There appeared a significant group of non-Jewish enthusiasts. In Navahrudak — it is Tamara Viarshytskaya, in Dziatlava — Zhanna Navahonskaya, in Asipovičy — Neanila Tsyhanok, in Smilavicy — Ludmila Drapeza, in Červień — Iryna Vabishchevich. Ina Sorkina described in detail the Hebrew life of Śvislač and Kapyl, Volha Sabaleuskaya — that of Hrodna, Zachar Šybieka — of Minsk, and others.

Haradok has its "namesakes" — former small towns, and now villages of the Klimavičy and Minsk districts, the district center Haradok in the Viciebsk Region.

Then there are "relatives" — Davyd-Haradok (Brest Region), Kazan-Haradok (Luniniec district), Asinaharadok (Pastavy district), Astrašycki Haradok and Siomkaŭ Haradok (Minsk district).

There are also derivatives from the same root — Haradcevičy (near Liepieľ), Haradziacičy (near Liubań), Harožа (near Asipovičy).

The etymology of the place name is beyond the doubt. The name Haradok means a small town, fortification, center of trade and crafts with a considerable proportion of population not involoved in agricultural activities.

Jewish small towns with the same name exist not only in Belarus. Ukraine has its own "Horodoks." (Russian: *Gorodok,* Polish: *Gródek*). For instance the village Horodok in the Manievychi district of the Volhynia Region, Horodok as a district center in the Ĺviv Region, and a district center named exactly the same in the Khmelnyckyi Region. In English the name Haradok is translated as *small town*. Similar small towns, inhabited by Jews (*miastečki*) existed in most European countries: *Kleinstädte,Flecken* or *Marktflecken* in Germany, *městys* in Bohemia, *commune* in France, *piccola citta* or *commune* in Italy.

The first written reference to "our" Haradok dates from 1162. In different time periods the town belonged to different clans of magnates, including the Hlebowiczs, Halinskis, Karnickis, Chmaras, Tyskiewiczs.

As a result of the Second partition of the *Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth* (1793) Haradok found itself in the Russian empire. From the end of the 19th century until the 1940s the majority of the town's population consisted of Jews. In the year 1847, 496 Jews lived in the town, in 1897 — 1230 (76.6%), in 1921 — 990.

The town lived a full-scale religious life. In the center of Haradok the Jews built a two-storied stone synagogue. In 1839-1853 its rabbi was *Eliahu-Chaim-Meisel*. As a matter of fact, the synagogue was built on the same lot as the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches. The building of the synagogue remained intact; although now it serves as the seat of the unitary agricultural enterprise "Biarezina-Ahrapradukt."

In the second half of the 19th century Haradok housed the following : the community administration, two Orthodox churches, two synagogues, a brewery, 22 shops, three taverns, an inn, a public school, a water-driven mill, a brick factory, a textile factory, a copper processing plant. In the beginning of the 20th century there appeared two Jewish religious schools, three tanneries, three plants manufacturing dishes, a plant producing mineral and carbonated water. The number of Jewish shops (there were no others) grew to 25, that of taverns — to 12. There was a Jewishsavings and loan association, active branches of Jewish political parties. Some Jews sympathized with Zionists, others with the Bund (General Jewish Labor Bund of Lithuania, Poland and Russia).

Prominent inhabitants of Haradok included Barukh *Ruderman* (1865-1928), one of the founders of the Jewish socialist movement in England, the rabbi *Ezekiel Sarna* (1889-1969), the writer *Chaim-Avrom Friedland* (1891-1939), the poet *Zelik M. Akselrod* (1904 -1941), brother of the noted artist Meer Akselrod (1902-1970).

Emigres from Haradok dispersed throughout the world, and were successful in many fields, due to their erudition. Chaim-Avrom Friedland, after receiving the traditional Hebrew education, emigrated to the United States. There, after graduating from the pedagogy department of the Columbia University, he established in New York in 1910 the first school for women with Jewish language of instruction. After 1920 Friedland has lived in Cleveland, Ohio, where he published poetry and short stories, articles on problems of culture and pedagogy.

The fate of *Ezekiel Sarna* was rather curious. During the World WarI he was evacuated from Slobodka to Kremenchug, where he became a student of the noted Jewish sage Chofetz Chaim. In 1924 Sarna departed for Palestine, and settled in Hebron; in 1927 he was heading the yeshiva "Hebron." He also renewed the yeshiva in Jerusalem, demolished by Arabs. Later Sarna became a member of the Council of Tora Sages (leading organ of the party "Agudat Yisrael"), and author of many works in the fields of Jewish philosophy and religious legislature.

In accordance with the Riga peace treaty of 1921, Ha-

radok was alotted to Poland; then, in 1939, it joined the Belarusian Soviet Republic (BSSR.) In the beginning of the Soviet-German war, Jews of Haradok were doomed to die. In March of 1942 the occupiers created a ghetto with capacity of about 1500. At the end of May 1942 about a hundred young Jews were deported to a labor camp in Krasnaje. On November 11 the ghetto was destroyed. Altogether 900 Jews perished (720 from Haradok, and 180 from surrounding villages). A black granite monument with inscriptions in Russian and Hebrew testifies to this tragedy.



The memory of Haradok's Jewish life has moved to the cemetery. I am asking Tatsiana Smolik to lead me there. One can get there only through a private courtyard — brushwood and windfallen trees make access difficult. Ahead there is a ploughed field, then a low stone pale, or whatever remained of it. Finally, I notice *matzevot* (grave sones). There are many; it doesn't make sense counting them . Most of them are now covered with grass and greensward, grown over by brushwood. The cemetery is large; in my estimate, it has over one hundred graves. This is what is still noticeable on the surface. I am reading inscriptions in Hebrew....



I walk the streets and wonder. One may still distinguish the features of a Jewish construction site, the pavement laid out in stones. Haradok has an orderly appearance; houses are looked after, there are flowers in the yards... Is this a dying village? Tatsiana Smolik relates that lately Haradok has experienced a second wind. Altogether 600 inhabitants have remained; from this only 400 are locals. The rest have arrived. In general, they are matured children, who have not let their parents' "heritage" become desolate. The renovated houses are transformed into places of rest. Livestock is not kept, greenhouses are not built; there are practically no gardens (not profitable). Only orchards, small meadows and flowerbeds. This produces the tidy appearance. What's interesting, as far their ethnic composition is concerned, inhabitants of today's Haradok are Belarusians and descendants of Jews.

Haradok' last Jew is buried .. in an Orthodox cemetery. It's a strange story. I am asking to show his grave. And really, midst crosses and metallic pales there rises a modest gravestone), on which I read: Yankel Iosifovich Averbukh (1891 - 1969). No, he was not a baptized Jew; the baptized usually changed their names. How did this happen ? The Nazis came to Haradok on the second or third day of the war. Nobody had time to be evacuated. After the republic's liberation only Averbukh returned to his native hearth ; in 1939 the NKVD deported him as a "bourgeois" and a Jewish nationalist. When Yankel died at 78 years of age, his Orthodox neighbors buried him in their own cemetery; there was no Jewish cemetery anymore, and nobody knew the customs.

I ask Tatsiana whether anyone is interested in the traces of Jewish life of Haradok? Local authorities are not, as there is constant lack of budget funds. Several times relatives of Haradok's Jews from the United States and Israel visited the town, there was also a group of students with a teacher from Poland. And Belarusians? Pundits - no, but enthusiasts - yes. How did it start? In 2011 Tatsiana Smolik, who was appointed director of the museum in Haradok, called Kuzma Kazak from the History Workshop in Minsk and asked for help. Thus the project "Friends of Haradok" was launched on September 12, 2012 with the aim to restore, preserve and develop the historical and cultural heritage. The project's purposes are maintenance of a scientific basis and the reconstruction of the historical past of the former Jewish town, the formation of the historical and cultural center "Haradok", and its inclusion into tourist destinations and eco-tourism program.

I also promised to help. On parting, Tatsiana gave me *hamsa* (a palm-shaped protective amulet, "the hand of God") with the words "Greetings from Belarus 2013".

It happened that I was writing my impressions of Haradok on the eve of the Jewish year 5774 in Jerusalem. I interrupted this process and went to my synagogue. It is known that on the day of Rosh Hashanah, or the Day of Judgment, God judges the world and people. All the prayers are intended to influence the decision of the Creator. According to belief, prayer and repentance of own sins are to help achieve a better fate for a person himself/herself and his/her family. I was listening to the shofar (a wind musical instrument made from a ram's horn), and behold the images of the Haradok's Jews, once a large and thriving community forever gone into oblivion. The same persons and images, the same words and prayer addressed to the Almighty God, just a different epoch and time.

Author: Dr. Leonid Smilovitsky, *chief researcher, The Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center, Tel Aviv University*

Why were Belarusian Valuables Exported to Galicia?

By Adam Maldzis

I wrote many times already about the valuable exhibits of Belarusian museums, exported in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries from Minsk and Stańkava to Ľviv and Kraków.

In the footsteps of the count of Stańkava...

I will remind: the count Emeryk von Hutten-Czapski, a wealthy Belarusian landowner and a noted Czarist dignitary in 1896 ordered loading six wagons with the most precious exhibits of his museum in Stańkava, and semi-legally, moved them across the border to Kraków, pretending to deliver them to an exhibition. They were supposed to be donated to Kraków's National Museum under surprisingly modest conditions: to be placed in a separate building (bought for this purpose by the donor himself), and to have the exhibition accessible to viewers. Undoubtedly, such an audacious decision by the count who was rather inert in ethnic issues, was due to the influence of the count's Belarusian friends: the writer Francišak Bahuševič, who, a few years earlier , assisted by Jan Karlovič, published in Kraków his "Bielaruskaja Dudka"and "Tralialienačka" (an important fact: Bahuševič's daughter Kanstancyja worked as a governess for the Hutten-Czapski family), as well as the count's relative, poet and collector of rare exhibits, Aliaksandr Jelski. By that time they both donated to the Kraków National Museum national relics they owned (still to be determined, which ones.)

However, for more than a century, the noble deed of Emeryk Hutten-Czapski could not result in a worthy conclusion. After the patron's sudden death, despite his widow's efforts, the imported exhibits remained inaccessible to visitors, since the building , with the sign "Museum of Hutten-Czapskis," was now occupied by the National Museum's headquarters. During four of my business trips I have attempted to locate in depositories unique editions of Belarusian printing houses; however, with no success. And, since in the given case ignoring the donor's will seemed to me not only a personal, but also national injustice, I have decided to treat the matter bluntly: if the gift is not needed in Kraków, and remains in reserve depositories, then it should be returned to Stańkava, the more so, since the treasure house there has been restored.

To my pleasant astonishment, the reaction followed immediately. Resources were found for repairing the building acquired by the patron, and the construction of an extension. A year later, during a special scholarly conference, held in in Belarus' National Historical Museum, historians from Kraków reported optimistically that the Emeryk Hutten-Czapski Museum is being revived as an European (that means, also Belarusian) center. And when, last year I expressed my intention to donate to the center a collection of conference materials, I was optimistically informed that the best time to do it would be in 2013, during the festive opening of the museum, which I will attend as a guest of honor. Why only myself ? As far as I know, the Stańkava collections were accumulated collectively. The revival of the richest Huten-Czapskis' museum represents for Belarusians a more significant event, to be limited only by my modest person.

This is why within the framework of a grant obtained by the Belarus' Institute of Culture, designed to discover and use collectively the Belarusian material and spiritual treasures, now located abroad, there was developed a section entitled "The Galician magnet for the Belarusian culture of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries." The section was joined by several persons capable of establishing the necessary contacts, and of describing treasures that genetically belong to us. We are also dealing with other collections — like that in Kraków (for instance the Czartoryskis' library and museum, created in the Mahilioŭ's *Dniapro* region), and that in Ľviv, fom where came a significant part of exhibits displayed at the recent exhibition in Minsk.

... and the archeologist and collector from Minsk ...

I also wrote about the pre-revolutionary museum and library collections of the Minsk collector Henryk Tatur, that, after Tatur's death were transferred by Ivan Luckievič and the Ukrainian educator Ilarion Svencickyj in 1907 to the Ľviv Uniate metropolitan Šeptyckyj. Luckievič thus hoped to circumvent czarist authorities' bans and create his first museum abroad. However, soon these bans were lifted. Vaclaŭ Lastoŭski, and after him the Luckievič brothers began collecting exhibits in Vilnia. Tatur's collection found its way to the Ukrainian National Museum in Ľviv; which, in the Soviet era remained half-closed. Therefore, my ideas concerning the collection were remaining very aproximate; they were based on stories by people who saw in Ľviv the Sluck sashes from the collection. This enabled me to suggest that our Ukrainian colleagues may be shown the Tatur's collection at the special exhibition in Minsk.

This is why, on May 8, 2013 I have visited the Belarus' National Art Museum with great hopes. The invitation card to the event stated: the exhibition is being organized by the Ľviv National Art Museum, the Ľviv Ukrainian museum and the Volynian ethnographic museum. Exhibits from the Henryk Tatura's museum were bound to be found in the first two. The exhibition's opening was festive; it was attended by diplomats, museum experts and the leadership of the Ministry of Culture. Directors of the Ukrainian museums spoke with enthusiasm about common historical figures, who today 'represent the cement for cooperation of our peoples,' about further perspectives of mutual actions. The museum's director Uladzimier Prakapcoŭ gave me also an opportunity to address the public. Using this occasion, I for the first time publicly referred to the program "The Galician magnet," that was already sent to Kraków. This produced some interest among the guests, but not much more. I have tried to locate some obviously Tatur's exhibits - yet without success. According to the Ľviv people, this would require additional research.

Judging by all I have said, for Belarusians the exhibition turned out to be not of interest. On the contrary, in the picture gallery one could find on every step portraits of

persons, closely tied with our history: numerous Sapiehas headed by the thoughtful chancellor Leŭ, the Chadkievičs, Astrožskis, Tyskievičs, the only king born on Belarus' territory — Stanislaw August Poniatowski, and so on - full three rooms , and, of course of the Radziwills — not only from the Volhynian, but also from the Niasviž branch. In the Radziwill hall upstairs there were several sashes, made in Sluck — according to the inscriptions. Yet neither myself nor my colleagues could find the sash from the Tatur's collection, whose photograph is in my book. Obviously, one has to keep looking.

The path led again to Kraków

The next day, after visiting the exhibition I got the idea that information about Tatur's collection could be found in the fundamental books of the well-known heraldist and patron Anatol Steckievič- Čabahanaŭ under the common title: 'I am your son. Chronicle of the Belarusian nobility.' A researcher actually succeeded in determining that this tireless collector, who put together a map of *kurhans* and gords of the Minsk gubernia, was born in Slonim on September 17, 1846. The text proceeds with a phrase 'Photographs of the well-known Belarusian archeologist were not found:; there exists only a description of his appearance.'

Nevertheless Anatol Steckievič- Čabahanaŭ succeeded in finding in the Vilnia historical archive a whole fund of materials related to Henryk Tatur; among them the most precious manuscript 'The system of sub-dividing archeological monuments on the territory of Minsk gubernia'(1893) and documents about the sale of hand weapons and rare books ... to Emeryk Hutten-Czapski and to others. All this testified to the collector's difficult material situation. (This is why the fund did not contain even his photographs.)

Letters by Emeryk Hutten-Czapski and his brother Karl (the head of Minsk city administration) to Henryk Tatur (1892) allow a reason to assume that the latter knew about the transfer of Stańkava collections to Kraków. This is where also landed his , listed in Vilnia documents, rare books in various languages (before being sold at considerable prices.) What interested me most was the secretive position entitled "Baranavičy." This railroad station was just being built . Why then this book (or manuscrpit) was valued much more than other editions of the 17th and 18th centuries ?

In general, the book by Anatol Steckievič- Čabahanaŭ convinced me even deeper , that Belarusians and wider Slavs may expect in Kraków some very interesting findings — in the Emeryk Hutten-Czapski museum , revived under the name "European Center."

Why to Galicia ?

Really - why were the collections exported precisely to Ľviv and Kraków? Most likely, it was not by accident. Activists of the just reviving Belarusian culture regarded Galicia, containing these ancient cities, as a promising, but most likely temporary field of action. At that time the internal atmosphere in this part of the multi-national Austro-Hungarian monarchy was much more tolerant than in the Russian empire, or in Prussia. This was probably due to the dualist lingustic basis of the state, in which the unrelated German and Hungarian languages enjoyed practically equal rights. For Belarusians it resembled the dualistic and therefore mighty Grand Duchy of Litva; which, as a matter of fact, was genetically, and historically closely connected with both Kraków and Ľviv. In the first city the Polish throne was assumed by the daughter of the Orthodox duke of Druck, Sofia of Haľšany, who later became the 'mother of Jagiellonian kings.' And in Ľviv, during the coronation of the Hungarian prince Rudolf, as the Galician and Volhynian king, according to the 1217 documents , Bielarus (*Alba Ruscia*) — our present ethnic and state name was heard for the first time.

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Editor's note: Galicia is a Central European region, a part of the former dual Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Its territory is currently divided by the Polish-Ukrainian border into the western , Polish part (with Kraków as its center,) and the eastern, Ukrainian part (with Ľviv as its center).

Aleś Kraŭcevič: In the Soviet Union's Conditions Belarusians Were Foisted the Russian View of the GDL as a Lithuanian State

Constitutional acts of the Belarusian Democratic Republic (BNR) as well as those of the present Republic Belarus, although indirectly, refer to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Litva, GDL) as one of forms of the Belarusian historical statehood. However, in the western historical literature in the context of political history Belarus is in no way identified with GDL. Why did this happen? What should be done so that Belarus begins being identified at least partially with GDL in the western historical research of the region's political history. ***Belarusian Review*** *has addressed with this question the well-known Belarusian historian and GDL expert,* ***Dr. Aleś Kraŭcevič.***

Aleś Kraŭcevič: "The history of Belarus is not being identified in most western literature (lately we find exceptions in works of professional historians) due to one reason: Belarusians' later beginning of the nation-creating process — in comparison with their neighbors, first of all with Lithuanians.

In the second half of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries national movements in Central and Eastern Europe strove to strengthen their claims for a modern state by appropriating traditions of some medieval state.

The heritage of GDL was claimed most by Lithuanians and Belarusians. Lithuanians were fortunate enough to create an independent state after World War I; in contrast Belarusians were not able to defend the declared state BNR.

In the inter-war period the Lithuanian historiography monopolized the GDL history with strong assistance by their state, and presented it as the historical form of Lithuanian statehood. Although, as the contemporary

American scholar Timothy Snyder argues: *"Lithuanian activists referred to an imagined Grand Duchy that fits their present predicament. They discounted tangible continuities from the early modern traditions of 1569-1795 in favor of a mythical vision of medieval Lithuania and Vilnius before the 1569 Lublin Union with Poland"*. As for Belarusians, Snyder emphasizes that *"if their success were actually determined by fidelity to the traditions of Grand Duchy of Lithuania, or by numbers of people speaking a given language, the Belarusians would have had more reason to hope than anyone else."* (Snyder, Timothy. The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003): 33, 42)

In the Soviet Union's conditions Belarusians were foisted the Russian view of the GDL as a Lithuanian State, that supposedly conquered Belarusians, who were then supposedly liberated by Russians. Only after Belarus gained independence in the beginning of the 90th years of the 20th century, there began developing an independent-minded subjective Belarusian historiography; today the pro-Russian Lukashenka's regime is trying to stop it or completely destroy.

Yet Belarusian historians succeeded — without assistance or sometimes even facing counter-action by authorities — in convincing the educated layers of the society that the GDL was a Belarusian state.

To present, defend and popularize the Belarusian vision of the GDL history in the international arena is possible only with the formation of a goal-oriented state policy. Such a policy has been long conducted in Lithuania — there even several historical, English-language periodicals are being published, designed to popularize the Lithuanian view on the GDL — clearly antagonistic to the Belarusian one.

We need a systemic historical policy, including that on the international level. It is necessary to create a coordinating council of the historical policy, consisting of leading historians, that will define priorities of scholarly research, propose and ratify topics of scholarly research (and dissertations), organize publishing textbooks and popular magazines, advise the politicians, etc.

Today in Belarus the Lukashenka's regime is conducting a clearly (though inconsequential) anti-Belarusian historical policy, with a goal of assimilating Belarusians into Russians.

Quotes of Quarter

"We have an opportunity to increase trade [between Belarus and Lithuania] by 25% every year. This year we expect the trade to go up 30%. Promising areas here include transportation and construction services. We expect them grow by 25%. Border regions such as Ašmiany, Astraviec, Voranava, Hrodna and Ščučyn have been actively cooperation with Lithuanian partners. We can say that Hrodna region has become an attractive region for Lithuanian business."

Uladzimir Drazhyn, ambassador of Belarus to Lithuania (27.09.2013)

Book Review:

Virginie Symaniec. La construction idéologique slave orientale. Langues, races et nations dans la Russie du XIXe siècle. Paris, 2012.

Publisher: Paris: Editions Pétra, 2012
ISBN: 9782847430455

Book review by Andrzej Tichomirow

Virginie Symaniec has published in 2012 a voluminous book on construction of identity in the Russian empire of the 19th century. There are not many French-language publications on this topic; there are almost no works analyzing the Belarusian and Ukrainian issues in this context.

The French research of Eastern and Central Europe is usually focused on Russia; somewhat less attention is paid to some larger countries of the region, as, for instance, Poland. Howåever , Belarusian and Ukrainian studies rather remain passion of few enthusiastic researchers.

The work by Virginie Symaniec *La construction idéologique slave oriental. Langues, races et nations dans la Russie du XIXe siècle* is indeed interdisciplinary; methodologically it may be found on the crossroads of history, sociology, linguistics and philosophy. It illustrates very well the French tradition of the 20th century, which describes the past without dividing it into political and social components; namely it strives to reveal it in its unity. The researcher relies first of all on published works (especially those of recent years), including the Belarusian ones (which is fairly rare for western researchers of our region.) Archival sources are here practically not exploited in this book. This, however, is fully compensated by the scholar's great erudition, but also by her skill to generalize the relatively large material.

Most recent works of history of the Russian empire, and those on the nation-buliding processes in the 19th century are focused on the analysis of these processes "inside" the state ruled by the Romanov dynasty. Despite the fact that the influences of ideas and practices of the European states on the Russian empire were very strong (many historians recall this, and even conduct research of specific issues), a good monograph on the issue of idea transfer from the West of our continent to the East in the 19th century is still lacking.

Virginie Symaniec seeks to look at the situation not only from the viewpoints of processes inside the empire, but also from the French perspective. This approach actually exploits not only the achievements of humanities and social sciences of the past 20th century and various research perspectives (including the postcolonial one), but also the traditions of French humanities of the 19th century.

The work consists of eight large chapters and deals first of all with the problematic of formation of three modern East Slavic nations. The author also analyzes various alternative ideas, as for instance the concept of "Turanism, " "two Russian nations," or "West-Rus'ism" (also known as

”West-Russianism”). The latter is, of course, very interesting for depicting the Belarusian situation.

The first chapter deals with the problematic of concepts and definitions, to which the author paid her closest attention — namely ”language,””race, and ”nations.”

The studies on idea movements and construction of modern identities in Eastern Europe very seldom turn to the concept ”race,” although it can fairly often be found in texts written 100 or 150 years ago. The roots of interest in this concept are depicted from the French perspective. At the same time peculiarities of nation-building theories , that dominate the intellectual sphere during the last decade are also considered. Virginie Symaniec also writes about a certain intellectual ”rehabilitation” of the Empire as historical reality, and about the popularity of the ”imperial” discourse in understanding precisely the Russian empire. She also recalls a very interesting personality from the middle of the 19th century — Adam Gurowski - a thinker of Polish origin, who consciously became a defender of Russia and Russian imperial, and even global perspective.

The second chapter is devoted to the problematic of ”race” and ”language”in the Western European thought since the end of the 18th century, beginning with Johann Gottlieb Fichte and his anthology of nations. Combination of various ways of describing ethnic issues precisely with help of these two concepts became one of the most exciting discussions in the European scholarship. The author examines the development of these discourses , and gradually switches to the analysis of the victory of the ”linguistic” concept in the description of symbolic ”limits” of nations.

The third chapter ”Slavic Russia or Turanian Muscovy under the rule of Napoleon III” describes a very interesting concept of the historian and philosopher Franciszek Duchinski who was a Polish emigre to France. Duchinski did not consider Russians Slavs , and derived their roots from Finno-Ugric and Altaic tribes. This ”racial” approach lifted the controversy between the adherence of the Russian language to Slavic roots and the essence of the Muscovite autocracy, since it emphasized a deep distinctness between Russians on one hand, and Poles and Ukrainians on the other. Duchinski’s concept was for a long time very popular in certain circles, and clearly contradicted the Russian interpretation of of their Russian past. It’s worthwhile to note that in the middle of the 19th century Duchinski’s ideas were discussed not only in the media of great capitals, but also in ”our region” — periodicals of Vilna, Lemberg or Kiev ardently wrote about the ”concept of turanism.”

Russian intellectuals replied by creating an integral image of history of Russia as an empire and nation; the first was the work by Nikolaj Karamzin. It is the fourth chapter of the work that deals with certain ”assimilation” of ”inviting” Varangians to Rus, and their linguistic identification with Slavs in the works of this initiator of the Russian historiography. The refusal to search for the ”racial” roots, so well attached by Duchinski to his description of the genesis of Russian nation, led to the ”blind admiration for the Russian language” (this is precisely the definition used by V. Symaniec to describe the outburst of that interest in language issues in that period.)

The main focus of the book’s fifth chapter is the issue of the ”division” or ”unity” of the imagined ” Russianess/Russianness ”, that originated already during the rule of emperor Nikolai I. Besides the actual discussions on the origin of language (among others the hypothesis about Greek roots of the Russian authority), the author pays attention to the first attempts of ”partitioning” the Eastern Slavic space, that were manifested in the works of the philologist Mykhailo Maksymovych, and the first steps of the ”Ukrainophile” concept, as well as to the description of the ”Lithuanian Rus” by the historian Mikhail Pogodin.

The Belarusian reader (and researchers of Belarusian issues from other countries) should quite naturally be interested in the sixth chapter entitled very eloquently ”White Rus or Western Rus?” (*”Blanche Russie ou Russie occidentale?”*). The researcher approaches the issue of Belarusian identity formation as a specific ”intellectual journey” of imperial philologists and historians to the recently annexed lands of the partitioned Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The image of a journey, ”discovery” of the new, ”unknown” countries, was characteristic for the nearly entire 18th century, from which it logically entered the next 19th century. The image of a journey was a very good rhetorical ploy and a certain research perspective, which is until today exploited by the cultural anthropology. By a journey the scholars of the 19th century sought to evaluate and describe the limits of the objects of their study (in this case of peoples, and their connection with other ethnic and religious groups.)

V. Symaniec pays attention to the evaluation of Kryvichians — precisely under this name contemporary Belarusians were initially described in the first half of the 19th century.

The next important moment was the national policy of the Vilna governor-general Mikhail Murav’ev, who is especially known for directing the suppression of the 1863-1864 uprising and for repressions of insurgents. The appeal to social rights and the ”discovery” of the peasant nation,who became Belarusians in eyes of the imperial administration. V. Symaniec pays attention to the concept of ”Litvinism,” and confers a great importance to the formation of the ”West-Rus’ism” ideology.

The author in her reflections on this theme refers mainly to the works by Aliaksandr Cvikievic, and a number of contemporary authors, including Alexey Miller, Mikhail Dolbilov or Valer Bulhakau. It is rather difficult to analyze the ”West-Rus’ism” without reference to the personality of Xenophont Govorskij and his ”Messenger of Western Russia.” Here V. Symaniec follows the path explored already by Aliaksandr Ćvikievič, and fluently crosses over to the analysis of views of Mikhail Kayalovich on ”Western Russia.” It’s worthile noting that the thoughts of this professor of the St.Petersburg Spiritual Academy were presented by referring to his historiographic and publicist works.

The seventh chapter of the book is devoted to relations

between various versions of "Russianness" and "Russianess" with a general concept of loyalty to the Empire. It is worthwhile to pay attention to concepts of Alexander Trubetskoi or the philologist Alexei Shakhmatov, as well as to various potential possibilities for understanding various parts of "Rus," including the Black and Red ones.

In the book's eighth chapter the author attempts to examine the relations of the imperial thought towards the gradual shaping of the Belarusianness as a separate form of identity. She analyzes the "separatism" associated with it, and the potential threat to the existence of the "all-Russian" project, associated with it.

The conclusion of the bok by Symaniec is focused on Belarus, as a phenomenon of gradual formation of a sovereign nation: from a regional form of ethnicity through the "discovery" by imperial scholars to a separate form of identity. The author addresses the events of the 20th century, problems of post-colonialism and understanding of the contemporary Belarus.

The book by Virginie Symaniec is distinguished by revealing various aspects of forming the three East Slavic nations in the background of all-European discussions of ethnicity in the 19th century (especially of the French scholarship). One should regard the book not as a of research based on archival sources, but rather as a generalizing work, accomplished on the basis of a a very wide range of works from various areas of humanities. A francophone reader obtained not only a panoramic picture of Belarus and Belarusians in the Russian Empire, but also an interesting generalizing book focused on these issues.

Quotes of Quarter

"In what regards Syria and other issues we are acting in the same spirit with Russia, our main strategic partner. We have no disagreements with Russia as well as with other CSTO member states. We will stay committed to our guarantees and promises and will move in sync with the CSTO members."

Aliaksandr Lukashenka (23.09.2013)

"No tortures or pains, no atrocities and abuses of the fascist butchers managed to break the will of our nation. …Our fathers and forefathers swore to fight until the Belarusian land is freed from the Nazi. By paying the price of unprecedented heroism and colossal victims they fulfilled their oath and, working together with all the peoples of the Soviet Union, cleansed Belarus and entire Europe from the brown plague."

Aliaksandr Lukashenka (23.09.2013)

ECONOMY

David Marples: Belarus Needs to Distinguish Itself From Russia and Russian Policies

July and August have been marked with another trade war which Russia announced against Ukraine. What will be the consequences of this war for Belarus and what Belarusian economy may learn from it?, - this is our question to professor David R. Marples for his traditional comment for Belarusian Review.

David R. Marples: Ukrainians could be asking the same question of Belarusians, because Russia has practiced similar policies in the past against Belarus, particularly in 2009 during the so-called "Dairy War" (the banning of Belarusian dairy exports to Russia because of alleged "sanitary" concerns). But it is a temporary tactic, a display of soft power rather than hard. In the Ukrainian case, it appears designed to intimidate the leadership and make it more reluctant to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union at the Vilnius summit in November.

The imposition of a ban on Ukrainian chocolate and other products caused a trade bottleneck at the Russian border and is estimated to have cost the Ukrainians about $2.5 billion in exports. It follows Russian president Vladimir Putin's rather unsatisfactory visit to Ukraine for the 1025th anniversary of the formation of Kyivan Rus, during which time he spent only 15 minutes talking to Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovych and more time at ceremonies and a conference about the importance of "the Slavic world." The tactics are familiar and quite basic: an economic war for political ends—in this case the goals seem destined to failure, at least in the short term.

Both the Ukrainian and Belarusian presidents still need Russian support to remain in office. In Ukraine's case, there is current pressure because of an impending deadline. Of late Russia has prioritized this issue since Ukraine's signing of the Association Agreement could preclude its participation in the Customs Union. Belarus is already firmly within this structure.

But let us turn to Russia's conception of a Slavic world, since that very much concerns Belarus. Such a vision was expressed at the conference in Kyiv, organized by Viktor Medvedchuk, the closest thing to an acolyte that Putin has in Ukraine. It harkens back to the reported common origin of the three East Slavic states, through the Orthodox Church (the Patriarch Kirill was also present in Ukraine for ceremonies), and a perception of a common historical background and cooperation, most recently in the Soviet period. Though the policy has failed manifestly in Ukraine so far, it has more chance of success in Belarus because of its focus on war and memory, and a common assumption that the Eastern Slavs were responsible—solely—for the defeat of Hitler and Fascism, i.e. they freed Europe and today's states are largely based on the sacrifice of wartime armies.

For Belarus, it is difficult for many residents to think beyond the Russian paradigm. The population of the Russian Federation is sixteen times larger, and the giant neighbor has never perceived Belarus as an independent state with its own, separate agenda. The foundation of Belarusian statehood is largely one of Soviet making, unless one believes that the BNR was embraced by a significant swathe of the population. Yet the Soviet state destroyed what it had built, eviscerated the Belarusian language and culture, and inculcated an image of Belarus as a Little Brother—one could say Very Little Brother, since Ukraine is also much larger and received the same appellation—that followed the wise Russian lead everywhere, from the Politburo to the United Nations.

This is the unfortunate reality and the Lukashenka regime has made matters considerably worse by reemphasizing the eternal and inviolable links with Russia at every opportunity. Yet, as James Sherr pointed out in a recent interview, Russia is no longer a serious global player, but powerful only within its regional sphere. And I think this is evident from the crude, bullying tactics over the dairy and chocolate "wars." There is no reason why Belarus cannot eventually follow Ukraine's direction. But then there appears the sort of question that has faced the new Arab Spring governments: what next? What follows an Association Agreement? At what point is the EU going to contemplate further expansion? And what must Belarus do to ensure a smooth path out of the Russian orbit, which is the only way to build a nation free from the shackles of the past?

Thus the issue is not simply one of east versus west, Russian authoritarianism and European democracy. Nor does it seem possible to do nothing or pursue some sort of ambivalent foreign policy whereby the Belarusian state dangles between two magnets. Yet on August 25, Belarus will have survived for 22 years as an independent state—an anniversary incidentally that will likely be ignored completely by the official media. Over this period, as opinion polls indicate, most residents have come to accept and appreciate the value of an independent state. But the current leadership lacks vision and strategy. Its entire policy is centered on retention of power, which weakens the state. Thus the conception of a new nation has to come from the builders—workers, farmers, students, lawyers, professors, and engineers, a largely silent but not unappreciative majority that comprises a largely apolitical but potentially explosive force if harnessed.

Until such a movement for change is in place, Vladimir Putin and his followers can behave as they wish: military maneuvers, threats, various forms of integration, greater or lesser, and—pertaining to the current discussion—nasty little trade wars that place a small weaker partner needing goods or exports against a more powerful one with more resources and money. In short, Belarus needs to distinguish itself from Russia and Russian policies. What has occurred to date is recognition of the merits of independence without any conception of what nation is being built and why it should differ from this neo-Soviet version, which has nothing new to offer.

With Belarus' Economy In Balance, Lukashenka Stands Up To Russia

By Robert Coalson

Amid conflicts with the United States over Syria and with several former Soviet republics over their increasingly close relations with the European Union, perhaps the last thing Russian President Vladimir Putin expected was to be blindsided by his usually loyal ally, Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka.

But that is exactly what happened on August 25 when authorities in Minsk arrested Vladislav Baumgertner, general director of Uralkali, the leading Russian producer of potash, a potassium-based fertilizer ingredient.

The potash business is crucial to Belarus's tottering economy. The state-owned Belaruskali producer is one of the top three taxpayers in the country and -- until recently -- the country's most reliable generator of hard currency.

Kirill Koktysh, professor at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), tells RFE/RL's Belarus Service that Baumgertner's detention was a stunning, unexpected move. "It's an open declaration of war. I think that now a long round of horse trading will begin. People in Russia are, to say the least, sincerely startled, if not in a state of shock," he says.

And then there's the question of what comes next. "Lukashenka has begun to demonstrate a rather forceful style," Koktysh says. "In the past when Lukashenka acted this way, Russia gave in. It will be interesting to see what happens this time."

High Stakes

Baumgertner was detained on vague accusations of "exceeding his authority" following a meeting with Belarusian Prime Minister Mikhail Myasnikovich, during which negotiations on joint pricing of Russian and Belarusian potash exports collapsed.

If convicted, Baumgertner could face up to 10 years in prison.

The incident potentially could have been even more shocking to the Kremlin because both Uralkali's main shareholder, Suleiman Kerimov, and board chairman Aleksandr Voloshin were also invited to the talks with Myasnikovich, but declined to attend. Kerimov is a leading Russian oligarch and a member of the Federation Council with ties to Putin. Voloshin was Putin's chief of staff from 1999 until 2003 and remains a political insider.

Russia responded quickly. Within days, Moscow suspended the import of Belarusian live hogs and pork products, announced a 20 percent cut in oil exports to Belarus, and hinted that Belarusian dairy products might be targeted next.

But Belarus upped the ante on September 2 by issuing an order to detain Kerimov, who is in Russia, on similarly vague charges.

Souring Partnership

The dispute stems from a 2005 agreement between Russia's Uralkali and Belaruskali to market their exports jointly through a firm called the Belarus Potash Company (BKK). At the time, the agreement enabled them to control about 40 percent of the global potash market. It was also seen as the beginning of a bid by Belaruskali to take over the smaller Uralkali.

But times changed. Belaruskali, like much of the rest of Belarus, stagnated, while Uralkali was purchased by Kerimov, who went on to buy other Russian potash producers. By 2011, Kerimov had set his sights on buying Belaruskali, as well as other lucrative state assets in Belarus. According to media reports, Lukashenka was ready to sell control of the firm for $30 billion, while Kerimov was offering $10 billion (plus, according to Lukashenka, a $5 billion bribe for Lukashenka himself).

As part of his effort to pressure Lukashenka into parting with Belaruskali, Kerimov gradually began selling potash outside of the BKK agreement. Last year, 80 percent of Uralkali's exports bypassed BKK entirely. Belarus accuses BKK's Uralkali-appointed managers -- including Baumgertner, BKK's chairman -- of spiking export deals and causing at least $100 million in losses to Belaruskali.



Uralkali General-Director Vladislav Baumgertner, who was detained in Belarus on August 26.

In retaliation, Lukashenka rescinded BKK's monopoly on Belarusian potash exports, prompting Uralkali to abrogate the BKK agreement altogether in July. That decision produced a steep drop in global potash prices -- a serious blow to Belaruskali and the economy. On August 30, Belaruskali announced it was suspending production at two of its four mines.

And so Lukashenka is playing tough, trying to get Putin's attention by taking Baumgertner "hostage," says Anatol Lyabedzka, chairman of Belarus's opposition United Civic Party. "I think that when there arose a conflict over potash sales, Lukashenka tried to solve it on the political level, in the Kremlin, with Putin," says Lyabedzka. "But he was ignored. For him, this was a bad signal. It meant that maybe it could happen again tomorrow, that the partnership was already gone, that Putin was in control. Lukashenka couldn't tolerate that, so he took this bold step to force the Kremlin to sit down and negotiate with him."

Good Timing?

Andrei Suzdaltsev, of the Global Economics and Global Politics Department of the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, agrees that arresting Baumgertner was an "emotional" move on Lukashenka's part.

"[The Belarusians] really thought that the meeting with the prime minister would -- on the strength of arguments like 'you are suffocating a fraternal nation' and the usual talk about how 'every fourth Belarusian died in World War II,' and 'Russia's obligations' and so on -- be successful in bringing Uralkali back into BKK," says Suzdaltsev. "But it didn't happen. So while the delegation was going to the airport, Lukashenka decided spontaneously -- enough!"

It is doubtless a tense moment in the uneven relationship between Belarus and Russia. But Lukashenka may have chosen his moment well.

Moscow is reluctant to see its customs union with Belarus and Kazakhstan -- and potentially now Armenia -- cast in a bad light as Ukraine, Moldova, and other post-Soviet countries prepare for closer relations with the European Union and the bloc's Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius this November.

Moreover, Minsk in recent months has worked hard to establish direct economic relations with China -- the world's main consumer of potash. Lukashenka visited Beijing in July and may have yet another surprise for Putin.

Based on reporting by RFE/RL's Belarus Service and by RFE/RL Russian Service correspondent Mikhail Sokolov,

September 04, 2013

HISTORICAL DATES

November 2 - Remembrance Day (Dziady)

The day for commemorating ancestors with a special family meal, dating from pre-Christian times and later associated with Christianity's All Souls' Day. .

Since the Belarusian Declaration of Sovereignty in July, 1990, **Dziady** became an occasion for patriotic demonstrations emphasizing the victims and heroes of the historical past. Such observances were led by the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF) and other groups and included marches to **Kurapaty**, a site near Minsk where mass executions took place during the Stalinist era.

November 1830 through 1831

The national liberation uprising against the Russian empire and for the renewal of the *Recpaspalitaja (Republic) of Two Nations* (Poland and Litva)

November 1st through December 31, 1920
The Anti-Bolshevik Slucak Uprising

Anti-Bolshevik military action in the region of Slucak, organized by representatives of the Belarusian Democratic [National] Republic.

MEDIA WATCH

Press Review

Russia's Relations with its Neighbours Become Increasingly Chilly

By Neil Buckley

Even as Vladimir Putin hosts this week's G20 summit in St Petersburg, the tensions reflect a new east-west struggle for influence in what the Russian president regards as his backyard.

The EU, through its "Eastern Partnership" programme, is offering political and trade deals to six ex-Soviet states. The agreements are similar to those the EU offered former Soviet satellites such as Poland in the 1990s, though without any promise of membership.

Moscow, meanwhile, is trying to pull ex-Soviet states into a customs union it has created with former Soviet Belarus and Kazakhstan which is due to deepen into a single economic space and ultimately an EU-style "Eurasian Union".

With several republics set to sign or initial (the final step before signing) EU agreements at a summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, in November, Moscow is trying to dissuade them.

For both sides, the biggest prize is Ukraine, a 46m-strong "swing state" at the heart of Europe.

As Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovych has resisted Mr Putin's blandishments to join the customs union – most recently at a tetchy meeting in July – Moscow has restricted imports of everything from Ukrainian steel to chocolates.

Then, last month, in the trade equivalent of a show of force, Russia temporarily slapped tougher customs controls on Ukrainian exports, causing delays costing millions. Mr Putin icily warned such measures would become permanent if Ukraine joined an EU free trade area, to prevent European goods being relabelled as Ukrainian and re-exported to Russia.

Similar trade skirmishing is starting with Moldova – another EU deal aspirant. Russia's deputy premier was also dispatched to Moldova this week to warn that signing an EU agreement could "complicate" its chances of resolving the conflict over its breakaway (Russian-influenced) Transdniester region.

Belarus is different. Europe's most autocratic state has no chance of an EU deal and is already in Russia's customs union. Its sin appears to have been courting China for financial help, while its president, Alexander Lukashenko, has for years failed to show the respect Mr Putin expects from a man he regards as a vassal.

But the methods are similar. In July, Russian fertiliser giant Uralkali pulled out of an export cartel with Belaruskali, a Belarusian producer. Prices for potash – a vital Belarusian export – plunged.

Belarus hit back last week by arresting Uralkali's chief executive in Minsk. Moscow tit-for-tatted by cutting oil exports to Minsk and restricting Belarusian dairy and pork imports.

The escalating squabbles show the importance Mr Putin places on reintegration of former Soviet republics. The Eurasian Union is his foreign policy centrepiece.

Yet they highlight, too, the limits of Russia's "soft power", even in fraternal Slavic countries it considers largely extensions of itself (though that attitude may be part of the problem). The relationship relies more on sticks than carrots.

Other than cheap energy – which all too often becomes a lever of influence – businessmen and analysts in many former Soviet republics say Russia offers little. They pooh-pooh Russian talk of reuniting cross-border Soviet-era industries fractured by the Soviet break-up.

Ukraine and Belarus have acquired a sense of sovereign statehood since the 1991 Soviet collapse which they are loath to dilute, even if their leaders are Soviet-born authoritarians running, to varying degrees, Putin-type systems.

So Moscow's heavy-handed tactics may backfire. The sight of Russia and Belarus trading punches is hardly a shining advertisement for the customs union.

Unless Mr Putin can find some juicier carrots to accompany the sticks before November, he risks becoming increasingly short of friends.

Source: Financial Times, Global Insight, September 3, 2013

Paźniak Blames Authorities of Spreading African Swine Fever

In remarking on the difficult situation resulting from the outbreak of the African swine fever, **Zianon Paźniak** (**Editor's note:** Chairman of the Conservative-Christian Party of the BPF, now living abroad) recalls that "originally in 2007 the pandemic broke out in Russia, spread to the entire European part of the Russian Federation; in the beginning of 2013 it was imported to Belarus. Lukashenka's regime did not perform the necessary measures (as did Ukraine , for instance), to safeguard Belarus from penetrating from Russia, did not prepare necessary veterinary and economic services for a quick, energetic and effective liquidation of foci of the African swine fever. When, in the spring of 2013 first such foci unexpectedly appeared in the Hrodna voblasc, regime authorities hushed up the event and applied insufficient prevention measures. In the result, the pandemic rapidly spread throughout northern Belarus in Hrodna, Minsk and Viciebsk regions, in parts of Mahiliou and Brest regions. There resulted a realistic danger of the pandemic spreading throughout the entire country, and may lead to the loss of the entire livestock population and to elimination of livestock breeding as a branch of the country's economy. Since the African fever is not curable, the only method to stop the disease is to destroy the livestock."

Paźniak writes, that "the pandemic of the African swine fever, imported from Russia, and allowed to spread by Belarus' authoritarian regime, represents a most telling blow to individual rural households, to all rural Belarusians.

It is also a blow affecting hundreds of thousands of Belarusian families living in the cities, and surviving thanks to the pig breeding industry. This blow affects our entire nation. The anti-Belarusian regime, along with destroying the Belarusian language and national culture, now began destroying the material basis for our people's existence. It is treating our people as an occupation power."

In Mr. Paźniak's opinion, "as one of first measures to be implemented in order to liquidate the pandemic — is the immediate closing of Belarus' boundary with Russia, which now became a constant source of the African swine fever.

It is necessary to erect along the border a metal fence in the localities of wild livestock migration. A state-run system of veterinary control must be established, corresponding to the extraordinary nature of the African swine pandemic. Measures, intended to stop the pandemic must be quick, radical and technologically exact. The population should be widely informed, and the compensation of their losses should be guaranteed."

The leader of the Conservative Christian party of the BPF is convinced that " the regime authorities, that permitted the rise of pandemic, are in no position to produce a technologically adequate method of fighting the pandemic. It is not capable of closing the border with Russia, and thus — of preventing further spread of the pandemic.

The pandemic keeps spreading, bringing Belarusians great misfortunes. Now is the time to think about changes in the country's authority. Only an authority that is based on national interests, is able to save the people and the society from misfortunes threatening the nation's existence. "

The system of customs control between Belarus and Russia was abolished in 1995. At that time the parliament deputies of the Belarusian Popular Front, headed by Zianon Paźniak, opposed this measure, declaring that it is against Belarus' state and economic interests.

Source: *Naša Niva*, August 13, 2013

New York Times

A Bitter 'Fertilizer War' Gripping Belarus and Russia is Helping U.S.Farmers

By ANDREW E. KRAMER

MOSCOW — American farmers are getting an unexpected windfall from a contentious fight between Russia and Belarus, a former Soviet splinter state.

The subject of the fight is potash, a fertilizer. The score so far: One imprisoned Russian business executive, the disintegration of a once-effective cartel that kept world potash prices high and political tension between the two countries.

What is being called the "fertilizer war" is the latest of numerous trade and economic spats between Russia and Belarus, whose leaders, though presiding over similar autocratic political systems, do not get along personally, Russian political analysts say. Aleksandr G. Lukashenko, president of Belarus, and Vladimir V. Putin, president of Russia, by most accounts detest each another. Their feelings have spilled over into the fertilizer business.

The potash problem reached a peak on July 30, when Uralkali, the Russian potash company, announced it was withdrawing from an international cartel called the Belarusian Potash Company, or B.P.C., which was created to keep prices high.

Two marketing groups, B.P.C. in the former Soviet Union and Canpotex in Canada, sell nearly all the potash in the world. B.P.C. marketed fertilizer for Uralkali and Belaruskali, the Belarussian company, and Canpotex for three Canadian producers, the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, Mosaic and Agrium.

For years, potash companies have kept a thumb on the global trade of this critical plant nutrient, choking back supply to raise prices much as the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries does with oil or De Beers with diamonds. The two cartels set nearly identical prices for potash worldwide, preventing farmers from benefiting from competition.

Uralkali said it was leaving B.P.C. because the Belarus president had been allowing fertilizer sales on the side. It predicted potash prices would drop about 25 percent, to $300 a ton, from around $400 a ton, when it left. The lower prices would hurt Russia, but they would hurt Belarus more.

Though Uralkali denies any direct link, this action came after years of efforts by Mr. Putin and the Kremlin to compel Belarus to sell strategic assets like oil refineries and natural gas pipelines, in exchange for subsidized energy supplies.

Mr. Lukashenko first agreed to sell a stake in Belaruskali, though the potash mine provides about 10 percent of the state tax revenue, but then balked. He said it was still for sale, but cited an exorbitantly high price, angering the Russian oligarchs who had been vying for it, and setting the stage for the breakup of the fertilizer cartel that followed.

The Belarussian government retaliated with what appeared to be a trap: the Belarussian prime minister invited the chief executive of Uralkali, Vladislav Baumgertner, to his country for talks on Aug. 26, and then arrested him at the airport. Uralkali's chairman, Aleksandr Voloshin, and a part owner, Suleyman Kerimov, had also been invited, but only Mr. Baumgertner showed up.

It was unclear whether the others stayed clear of Belarus because they had sensed a trap, or whether their schedules simply did not have room for the country's prime minister, which was the formal explanation both officials offered.

Mr. Baumgertner was charged with "abuse of power," which carries a potential 10-year sentence. Belarus state television showed his glum perp walk past the water-stained concrete walls of a prison nicknamed "the American girl," led by a chubby guard in a camouflage uniform.

Belaruskali, which is state-owned, has no public relations office. The switchboard referred calls to Anatoly V. Makhlai, whose title is deputy director for ideology and cadres, who declined to comment.

Later, the Belarussian authorities issued arrest warrants for four other executives and Mr. Kerimov, the part owner. Analysts say Mr. Baumgertner is not likely to serve hard time but is instead being held as a hostage to compel the Russians to rejoin the cartel.

Outraged, the Russians responded with a flurry of trade restrictions, banning all Belarussian pork imports, ostensibly over newly discovered health concerns.

"It looks like the conflict is escalating," Boris Krasnojenov, a mining analyst at Renaissance Capital, an investment bank based in Moscow, confirmed in an interview.

Farmers and fertilizer companies are watching closely. Shares in the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan rose earlier this week after signs of a reconciliation.

Reports indicated Mr. Kerimov would sell his stake to another Russian oligarch more palatable to President Lukashenko or to the nickel mining company Norilsk, leading to a patching up of ties and re-creation of the price-fixing cartel. But Norilsk said on Wednesday that it had no plans to buy a stake. Shares in Potash Corporation fell again.

Even by the standards of business practices in the former Soviet Union, these tactics appeared blunt. "This move is absolutely aggressive and abnormal," Mr. Krasnojenov said, referring to the arrest of Mr. Baumgertner. "The prime minister invited the C.E.O. of a major company to a meeting and then arrested him."

The dispute has hurt profits of both Uralkali and its former Belarussian partner, Belaruskali — and been wonderful for farmers from Idaho to India who have already benefited from lower fertilizer prices. Potash is one of three main plant nutrients, along with phosphate and nitrogen, and is used widely to increase corn and soybean yields.

The price for granular potash in the Midwest has fallen to around $400 a ton, from $420 before the announcement on July 30.

"Optimists say that every cloud has a silver lining," Ed Lotterman, a columnist for The Idaho Statesman, wrote of the wobbling cartel. "It isn't hard to find one in the recent potash industry upheaval that sent the stock of several fertilizer producers down by a fourth. What is bad for them is great news for U.S. farmers."

Quotes of Quarter

"The situation [in the potash industry] is getting back to normal, even without their [Uralkali] involvement. I have been approached by the people who want to buy potash fertilizers from Belarus. …Only an idiot does not work to his own benefit. Our re-merger with the Russian company will raise the prices for potash fertilizers. Our separation will definitely bring the prices down. …But the main thing is that no one is allowed to wipe the floor with us. We are a sovereign independent state and we will be protecting our interests."

Aliaksandr Lukashenka (28.09.2013)

Beijing Takes Big Stake In Russian Potash Firm

Investment in Uralkali Complicats Any Revival of Pricing Cartel

By Lukas I. Alpert

China took a 12.5% stake in Russia's Uralkali JSC, moving to secure supplies of potash and casting doubt on whether a global pricing cartel for the fertilizer ingredient could be revived.

Tuesday's move by the world's top potash buyer injects a significant consumer voice into a $22 billion-a-year industry that has been in turmoil since the cartel's recent collapse.

"This adds yet another nail in the coffin of the cartel," said Catherine Tubb, an analyst with Sanford C. Bernstein in London. "With the Chinese in the picture, the likelihood that things could ever go back to where they were has decreased."

The deal comes amid a battle between Uralkali and Belarus over the July collapse of the sales partnership, which landed the Russian company's chief executive in a Belarusian jail.

China, which consumed 9.8 million tons of potash last year, according to a global fertilizer trade group, has only a handful of domestic producers and relies heavily on imports. Nearly 70% of the country's supply came from abroad last year.

National governments have zealously defended against foreign ownership of potash companies. Canada in 2010 rejected a $39 billion take-over bid of Potash Corp. of Saskatchewan by Anglo-Australian mining company BHP Billiton, saying the acquisition wouldn't be in Canada's interest.

In Tuesday's deal, sovereign-wealth fund China Investment Corp. took control of the Uralkali stake by exercising an option on a convertible bond brought last November. At Uralkali's current share price, the stake is valued at $2.03 billion. When CIC bought the bond, the stake was valued at $2.7 billion, although the terms of that purchase weren't disclosed.

CIC, which acted through its Chengdong Investment Corp. subsidiary, didn't respond to a request for the comment.

Uralkali Chief Executive Vladislav Baumgertner has been jailed in Belarus since Aug. 26, when he was arrested on charges of abusing his power when his company exited Belaruskali OAO. Belarusian authorities also issued a warrant for the arrest of Uralkali's principal owner, billionaire Suleiman Kerimov.

Uralkali has dismissed the charges as politically motivated.

Uralkali's decision to exit BPC ended an informal global cartel made up of BPC and North America's Canpotex that once controlled two-thirds of the world's supply. The Russian miner's move sent potash company stocks plunging

world-wide as Uralkali said it would seek greater volume, rather than higher prices, and predicted that global potash prices would fall 25% by year-end. Potash consumers since have demanded discounts, and producers have slashed their financial forecasts.

The Uralkali decision placed heavy strains on Belarus's economy, which relies on potash form more than 7% of its export revenue.

Executives at North American potash producers have predicted that Uralkali and Belaruskali eventually would resume their trading relationship.

But analysts on Tuesday said the China factor complicates the equation.

"If Belaruskali and Uralkali rebuild the BPC venture, it would have to be on the premise that they go back to the old strategy of the price over volume. But this is the last thing the Chinese side would like to see as they are interested in lower potash prices," said Boris Krasnojenov, a mining analyst with Renaissance Capital in Moscow.

CIC's move doesn't give the Chinese company enough of a stake to dictate prices. But the holding likely will lead to the CIC getting at least one seat on Uralkali's board. That would give Beijing knowledge of the inner workings of one of China's biggest potash suppliers and provide leverage in price negotiations.

Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenka has said his country's fight with Uralkali could end only if the Russian miner got new owners.

CIC's convertible bond had been issued by a special-purpose vehicle owned by Mr. Kerimov and his two partners. By converting the bond to shares, CIC transfers ownership of a sizable Uralkali stake out of the Russian partners' hands. Mr. Kerimov also is in talks to sell the 21.75% stake he owns through his foundation. And his partners are eager to sell their smaller stakes, people close to them say. Together the men control just over a third of Uralkali. Several Russian tycoons are among potential buyers, but there also is interest from investment groups in Asia, people familiar with the situation say. They say Mr. Kerimov is seeking an overall valuation for the company of about $20 billion, substantially above the current market price of roughly $16 billion.

It is unclear, however, how any ownership changes would affect Uralkali's relationship with Belarus.

There have been signs that a deal would be reached to patch the relationship between Uralkali and Belaruskali. Mr. Lukashenka last week said he was open to returning Mr. Baumgertner to Russia if he were to face prosecution there. Mr. Lukashenka and Russian President Vladimir Putin briefly discussed the situation Monday on the sidelines of a summit meeting but no resolution was announced. On Tuesday, Russia's prosecutor general was in the Belarusian capital and discussed the case, but there was no word of a resolution.

– Gregory L. White contributed to this article.

Source: *The Wall Street Journal, September 25, 2013.*

SPORTS

Victoria Azáranka Won an Epic Battle

Belarus' Victoria Azáranka won an epic battle with the top seed Serena Williams in the WTA Cincinnati Open after 2 hours 29 minutes.

The 24-year-old world No 2 seed Victoria Azáranka defeated the 31-year-old Serena Williams 2:6, 6:2, 7:6 (8:6). This is Azáranka's third victory over the American and probably the hardest won. Towards the end of the third set, Vika appeared to have more strength left to pull out the epic win.



On her way to the final, Azáranka defeated the American Vania King 6:1, 7:6, Slovakia's Magdalena Rybarikova 6:3, 6:4, Denmarks's Caroline Wozniacki 6:3, 7:6 and Serbian Alena Jankovic 4:6, 6:2, 6:3.

The WTA Cincinnatti Open prize fund is $2,300,000. Victoria Azáranka has won the title for the first time in her career.

Source: European Radio for Belarus, Aug. 19, 2013

Williams Defeats Azáranka in US Open Final

The World No. 2 lost after persistent struggle – 5:7, 7:6, 1:6. The whole game took 2 hours and 45 minutes.

Victoria had a good chance to win the first set because Serena was not playing very well and could not get used to the strong wind for a while. However, the American player won the first set, Williams was playing calmly and accurately while Azáranka was overwhelmed by emotions and was making double faults in the second set. The score was 4:1 in the American's favour but the Belarusian still managed to win in the tie-break. Serena Williams was making fewer mistakes in the third set and won.

Ex-President Bill Clinton attended the match.



US Open finalists

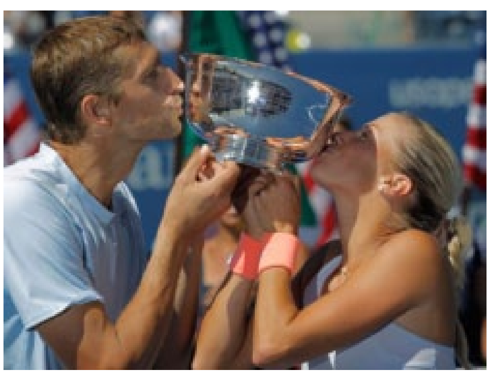
Thus, Serena Williams took revenge for her loss to Azáranka in Cincinnati. Victoria also lost to Serena in the US Open a year ago — 2:6, 6:2, 5:7. Williams – Azáranka general score is now 13:3 in favour of the American.

Source: European Radio for Belarus, Sept. 9, 2013

Maksim Mirny Wins US Open Mixed Doubles Title

Belarusian veteran tennis player Maksim (Max) Mirny won his third US Open mixed doubles title in New York on Friday, joining Czech Andrea Hlaváčková to beat Mexican Santiago Gonzalez and American Abigail Spears 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 in the final. The seventh-seeded European duo needed only 86 minutes to beat the unseeded North Americans for the $150,000 top prize at Arthur Ashe Stadium. The Belarusian won his first US Open mixed doubles title with Serena Williams in 1998 and took his second in 2007 alongside compatriot Viktoria Azáranka He partnered with Ms. Azáranka to win the mixed doubles Olympic gold medal in London last year. The Friday victory was the 36-year-old Mirny's 10th Grand Slam doubles title in his career.

Source: NAVINY. by, Sept. 9, 2013



Happy mixed doubles champions

Maksim's partner, Andrea praised him: " Max covered 80% of the court." He reciprocated: "I couldn't have wished a better partner."

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